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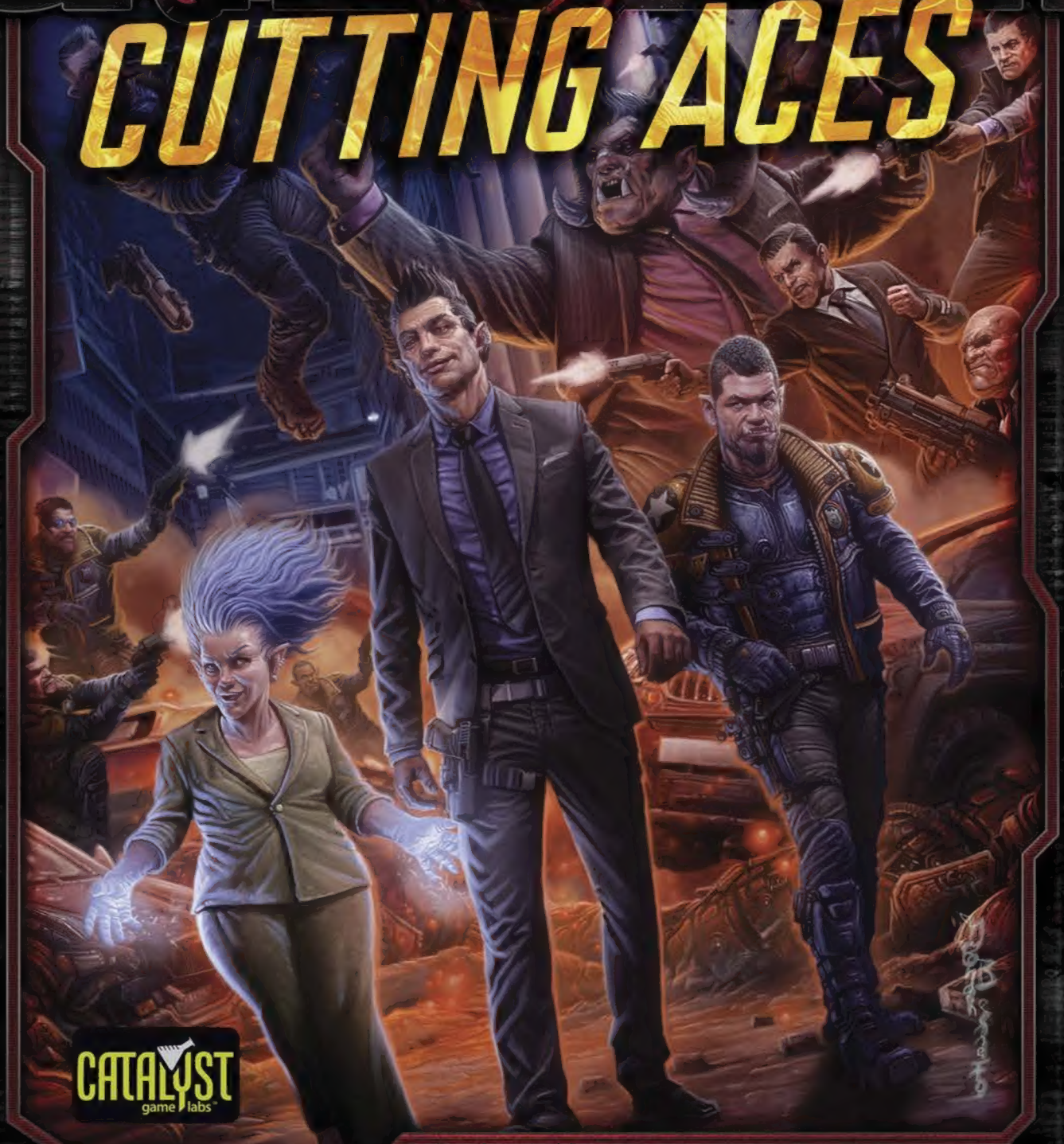

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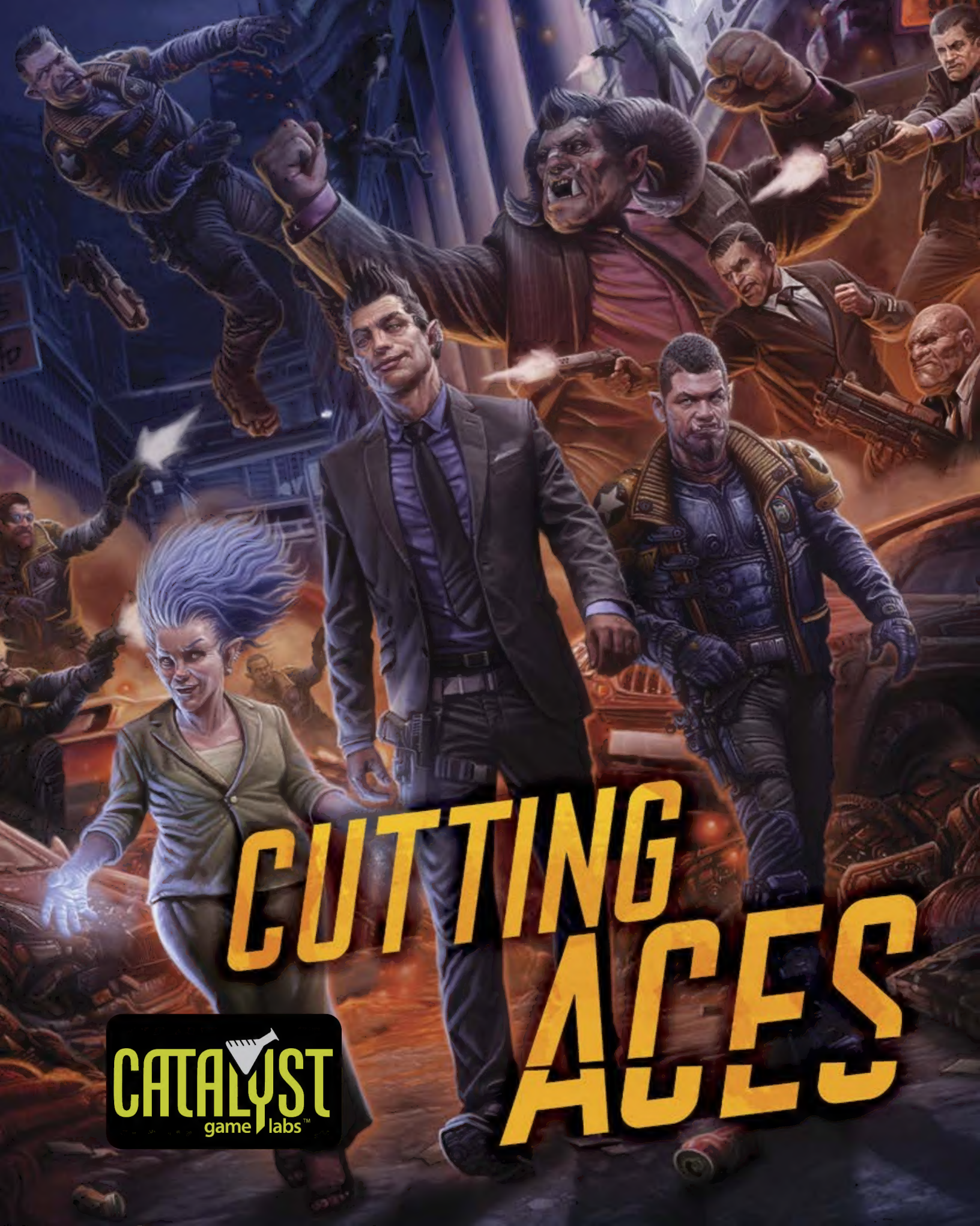
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INTRODUCTION

Every tool used on a shadowrun is, in the end, dedicated toward making people do things they don't want to do. Sometimes it's as simple as letting runners have some data or technology they're not supposed to have, or get into someplace they're not supposed to be. Other times it's a little more complicated—convincing someone to tell you something they know they're not supposed to divulge, or persuading someone who feels safe and comfortable in a job to upheave their life and go someplace else. Often, the tools runners use are blunt and not entirely sophisticated—threatening to make someone dead if they don't listen to you, or actually making them dead if they're too much in the way, can be effective but also loud and messy. Who hasn't dreamed about walking up to a tightly guarded facility and watching the guards smile as they invite you in? Or not even having to break into a facility to get some critical paydata, but rather have some corp suit bring it to you and then hand it over in some safe location with a handshake and a smile? That's the beauty of the con—it's the art of not just getting what you want, but making people want to give it to you.

Real con artists know they never have to ask anyone for anything—they just have to tell a convincing story, then let the mark take the steps they want to take. That's the broad outline of any con, but within that framework are multitudes of strategies and tactics, dozens of ways to win people's trust and then abuse it. Though if you're really good, your marks will walk away from the process never fully understanding just what happened and how they got screwed. They might even harbor a lingering affection for the con artist, refusing to believe that the person who earned their confidence could have ever acted to hurt them.

Cutting Aces is the Sixth World guide to con artistry, with information on cons ranging from short-term efforts to wrangle a little spending cash, to more baroque affairs that can entangle runners in all sorts of intrigue for the chance at tremendous scores that would make bank robbers from the cash era jealous. The guide begins with *Fast and Loose*, an overview of some of the current events in the Sixth World that particularly lend themselves to shell games and the like. Then it moves on to *City of the World's Desire*, a look at the free city of Constantinople, whose location, culture, and history make it ideally suited for all sorts of confidence work. *Alibi Agents of Constantinople* lists some of the vital players in that sprawl, while *The Art of Confidence* is a detailed look at some of the con games people play and how some of the classics have been tweaked to remain relevant in the Sixth World. *Gats and Glad Rags* is a treasure trove of tools that con artists can use to get their job done—gear, spells, qualities, and more. Finally, *The Grifting Bible* offers enhanced social rules for *Shadowrun*, so that players wishing to play a con angle in their games have new ways to make the score go down. Taken together, the book gives runners the whole package, everything they need to make the world give them what they want, then beg to give them more.

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OPERATION: CONSTANTINOPLE

The trick was not coming up with a laundry list of things that might go wrong. The trick was knowing which of those options was right.

"Mr. Johnson hasn't been late before," Cadence said. "Three meetings so far, on time to every one."

"He was two minutes late to the third one," Dietrich said.

"Like that matters!"

Dietrich gave his "just saying" shrug.

"There's a problem, Cadence is saying," Pineapple said in his relaxed rumble.

"Of course that's what I'm saying! Something is wrong, which means someone is screwing us. And we have a limited few minutes to figure out who and why."

Beads hung down from and archway near their table, golden plastic in a tapering triangle, only slightly obscuring the four team members huddled around a square table, drinking sahlep. Pineapple had been conscientious for the first few sips about licking away his cream mustache, but he had been nursing the large mug for almost half an hour, and he didn't care anymore. Foam flecked his stubble.

"Two basic stories here," Cadence said. "First, Mr. Johnson is not here because he doesn't want to be here. Second, Mr. Johnson is not here because someone or something is preventing him from being here. There are no other alternatives."

No one could find a way to disagree with that.

"He arranged this meeting to get the thing he wants, a little chip with no wireless capabilities that must have been developed in the Pleistocene Epoch. If he arranged a meeting and does not want to be here, it's because he wants to get the chip without paying us, and by sitting here we are just waiting for whatever he has planned to happen. If someone is delaying him—and if someone says 'Maybe it's just traffic,' I will slap them—it's because they do not want the handoff to happen, and delaying Mr. Johnson will not be enough for them. They'll want the chip either in their hands or destroyed. On top of that, it's very likely that the reason Mr. Johnson is being delayed is so they can find out how the handoff was going down, meaning in some form or another, they are working to find out where we are."

Paytah stood, looking ready to pounce, since he always looked that way, even asleep. "Sounds like it's time to go."

Cadence and Dietrich stood immediately. Pineapple slammed down the last bit of his sehlap, then unfolded himself to his full archway-scraping height. He didn't stoop. Pineapple perpetually walked as though he would much rather the world got out of his way rather than vice versa.

"Where do we go?" he asked.

"We stay in the Bazaar," Dietrich said. He ran his hand down his purple-streaked Van Dyke, possibly for re-assurance. "Gather some clues for what's going on, maybe get ahead of it."

Cadence pulled a handgun, held it in her right hand while awkwardly tapping at the cyberdeck on her left arm, then sighed,

BY KAI O'CONNAL WITH STEVEN "BULL" RATKOVICH

holstered the gun again, and let her hand move faster.

"If they're going to do something using the Polis or Bazaar security, they haven't made their move yet," she said. "No alerts."

"Police action is too obvious," Dietrich said. "They want to play it in a lower key. Or at least involve guns not held by official hands."

Pineapple sighed theatrically. "Don't people just try to blow up shit anymore to get what they want? What kind of world do we live in?"

"Do you have a lock on Mr. Johnson's link?" Paytah asked.

"No," Cadence said. "Lost it a few days ago. Dietrich, are your eyes in the sky?"

Dietrich looked offended, then briefly jerked his head up. A ghostly white outline of a bird briefly appeared.

"Of course," he said.

They walked through the broad corridors, with merchants calmly making their pitches as they walked by. The Bazaar drew in hundreds of thousands of customers daily, so the merchants did not feel the same urgency to pull in individual customers that they might in other Constantinople markets. If one customer passed them by, another hundred thousand was behind them, weighed down by all their tourist money. The merchants could be patient.

The team reached a four-way intersection and took a right, passing by stalls of rugs. They jogged by a few more intersections then took a left, now passing by bracelets and necklaces and all sorts of things that attempted to look like gold without actually being gold.

Cadence studied AROs the whole time, private ones that only she could see. Sometimes she flicked at them, sometimes she tapped on her cyberdeck, but she kept them flitting by, scanning the experiences of dozens of different shadowrunners, looking and learning. Then, by the time they were approaching the crowded auction space, she had come to a conclusion.

She took a few quick steps and then turned, stopping in front of the other members of her team.

"I've got an idea," she said. The team looked attentive. "But somebody's probably going to get hurt."

The call finally came an hour and fifteen minutes after the scheduled meeting time. Mr. Johnson didn't bother with any pleasantries. "I hope you're not still at that damn café."

Dietrich was on voice, but everyone else was listening. "No, we weren't about to stay there. What happened?"

"Got ambushed. I'm out now, but they're looking for you. Four of them—two humans, an ork, and an elf. They've probably changed clothes from when I last saw them, but there's no erasing the face tattoos on the elf. Asymmetric triangles, black and white."

Dietrich looked at Cadence. She nodded.

"All right, we'll steer clear. How are we going to get the chip to you?"

"I've sent an assistant named Cagri. Go to the center of the Ic Bedesten and wait. It won't take her longer than fifteen minutes. She'll find you and ask you if you have seen any Koral ceramics in the Bazaar. You tell her you've got no eye for pottery. Then you'll know each other, and you can take care of business. She'll make sure you get paid."

"Sounds easy enough," Dietrich said.

"I hope so. Sorry about the delay."

"Everything's forgiven when we're paid." Dietrich kept his tone light.

"Then all will be well shortly. Certified credsticks, as agreed." He disconnected.

Overhead, a ghostly white form gently circled. Paytah glanced up.

"This is the plan?" he said.

Cadence nodded. "This is the plan."

They didn't spread out in order to make it easier for Cagri to find them. It didn't take long. Twelve minutes after Mr. Johnson's call, as the team pretended they could somehow accurately appraise the value of copper pots, a woman in a white blouse and a brightly colored skirt casually walked over to the team. She stopped nearby, looked at the pots, looked left, looked right, then looked at Cadence, apparently unfazed by her visible weapons and body armor.

"Excuse me, but I don't suppose you have seen any Koral ceramics in the Bazaar?"

"Wouldn't know them if they bit me on the ass. Because I've got no eye for pottery."

The woman, presumably Cagri, nodded and spoke lowly. "Good. Do you want to go somewhere?"

"Just got to do a simple exchange. Here is fine."

Cagri nodded again. "The item?"

Cadence pulled out a small chip from her vest. "Right here."

"Of course you'll understand if I verify it first?"

"I'd rather have cash in hand."

"Have other employers been sloppy enough to work that way?"

Cadence reached out her hand. "I can always hope."

Cagri produced a small cable and plugged it into her commlink, then slotted the chip into the other end. She looked up and smiled. "This cable is so old I don't think even the antiques dealers here have any of them." She looked at readouts on her commlink screen—per Mr. Johnson's instructions, at no point was the data from the chip ever to be transmitted wirelessly to any place, even in the form of an ARO.

She looks up. "This looks fine. I'm happy to ... oh, no."

Four heads turned to see where Cagri was looking. Four people were moving their way through the crowd, giving off the sort of determination that made people move out of their way. The person in front had asymmetric black-and-white triangles on her cheeks and a pixie cut with ragged bangs. All four of them had weapons on their hips but nothing drawn.

"We have to move," Cagri said.

"We haven't been paid yet."

"You want to live to spend this money? Move!" She obeyed her own instructions, walking in the opposite direction from the team closing in.

"I want to at least hold it!" Cadence said, but she was without a choice. Her money was moving away, so she had to follow.

The pace of pursuit picked up immediately, but no words were exchanged. So far, so calm.

But when Cagri and the runners with her picked up the pace to a run, so did the pursuit. People started to notice, and the chances to do this subtly faded. The pursuing team pulled out their weapons.

They weren't too far from the eastern edge of the Bazaar. A good sprint might take them outside. So of course it was not going to be that easy.

There were not guards at every entrance to the Bazaar—it wasn't a military fortress—but the Polis station for the Bazaar was not far from the eastern wall, and some officers streamed out of the station to head off the chase before anyone got away. They had their weapons out.

Magic amplification made the voice of the lead officer easy to hear. "Please drop your weapons and raise your arms," the officer said. He and three of his fellow officers had pistols leveled at the people in front of them.

But not up. The white ghostly bird became less ghostly, screaming down from the ceiling at the surprised officers. They raised their weapons and fired into insubstantiality. By the time they noticed that the bird was a phantom and re-leveled their guns, Cadence and her team had veered right at a full run. The second team was right behind them.

"Pineapple, up front!" Cadence called. Pineapple took three long troll strides to draw ahead of the others, and he kept sprinting as he burst into the rear of the auction area. He slowed down so he could start throwing things. Pots, vases, rugs, a large wooden chest, and a few crates flew into the air, covering enough distance to clear his teammates but bother the pursuit. It also caused chaos in the crowd, which was part of Pineapple's normal mode of operations. He kept moving, grabbing the auctioneer's podium and ripping it from the slightly elevated platform while the auctioneer sprinted toward anyplace that looked safe. With a tremendous heave, Pineapple sent the podium sailing after the other merchandise he had tossed. His grin seemed as wide as his chest. He turned and looked at the pit of bidders, most of whom were scrambling away. He jumped off the stage, like a predator going after something slow and tasty, and watched people scatter even faster. The rest of his team followed.

"Direction?" he yelled.

"West," Cadence said. They sprinted.

They were close to the southern edge of the Bazaar, but there were not many gates at this area, so fewer opportunities for Polis or other troublemakers to run in and cause chaos. Which was fine, as there was no particular need for the chaos to increase. Screams had started in the auction area and spread, so people were screaming all over without knowing why. They were also running and occasionally diving behind stalls, which did not make the shopkeepers happy, though some of them were panicking too, so they didn't notice. And yet while people were running and screaming, Cadence did not see anyone pointing a weapon at her. The path ahead seemed clear enough, despite the aforementioned chaos, that she thought it was entirely possible that they could make it to the Carsikapi Gate and out of the Bazaar without further difficulty.

Which is when Cagri decided to turn right, moving back into the heart of the Bazaar.

"What the hell are you doing?" Dietrich yelled, as a show of surprise was important. Cagri didn't answer, she just ran. She crossed

one aisle, then another, then a ball of blue energy slammed right into her head, bringing her down.

"Pineapple, scoop," Cadence said. But he never had the chance. The other team arrived at Cagri's body the same time, weapons out (which, in the case of the triangle-faced woman, meant glowing hands extended), ready for battle. Which is what they got.

Cadence went high-tech and low-tech at the same time, getting her cyberdeck to scan wireless signals from the team while whipping out a pistol and spraying the opposing team with bullets. Pineapple saw the chance at melee and rushed at it with relish, taking wide, arcing swings that could bring down a wall—or at least an ork, which in fact happened when he made solid contact with the side of the ork's head. Dietrich went simple, blasts of red energy that pummeled one of the humans to the ground. Paytah, for his part, made use of the landscape he had been studying all this time, jumping on a crate, then a display table, then pushing off a wall and sending a wheelhouse kick into the side of the elf's head. The elf fell on top of the other human, who had dropped from Cadence's bullets.

She lowered her gun. That was fast. Too bad. She didn't get to hack anything.

That's when she noticed Paytah was down. One of the humans must have gotten a few rounds off while Paytah delivered his kick. He was bleeding from the arm and shoulder and was in no shape of stand.

"Shit," Cadence said. "Dietrich, can we air-deliver him?"

Dietrich frowned. "Would be easier if it were you. But I'll have her try."

The white bird appeared again, this time fully materialized, with a wingspan of three meters. It darted down toward Paytah, gripping his waist with talons that seemed to grow longer as they opened. It flapped once, twice, three times, then lifted off the ground. Cadence guessed that it was calling on strength that went beyond physical.

"Which way?" Dietrich asked.

Bullets flew from the east.

"West," Cadence said, and started running. The others followed her.

Looked like she got to do some hacking after all. She broke into a few cameras behind her to see who was firing at her. Black-uniformed, visored security types. GS on the sleeves. Global Sandstorm. Their opponents were showing all their cards.

She sprinted. She really wanted to fire some shots, but sometimes precision was better. She focused on the cyberdeck on her wrist—a few flicks here, a circle there, an index finger slam for emphasis. Behind her, the magazine of an assault rifle dropped to the ground while a security guard cursed.

Pineapple had drawn his pistols, since they seemed the more responsible option, and was firing some shots behind him, but he occasionally looked backward with longing. Cadence knew what he wanted.

"Let Dietrich set you up," she said. "Then make sure you come back safe."

Pineapple grinned.

Dietrich's illusion was smooth. He didn't make people appear out of thin air; he made them walk around corners, stroll out of stalls, that sort of thing. About the only way to tell they weren't real was to walk through them and not feel them. The guards avoided a few, ran through some that made no impact, then, thinking they had things figured out, sprinted forward and ran into real people and knocked them flat. The corp sec guys were confused and, most importantly, slowed. They bunched a little closer together in their puzzlement, and that's when Pineapple made his move. With a roar, he turned and charged.

Most of the corp sec stepped back in surprise. A few fired shots, but if they managed to hit Pineapple, they didn't slow him. The troll started the horizontal pendulum swing of his arms and landed some truly devastating blows on the heads of the guards. He let one swing turn into a kick, sending a corp sec guy a meter in the air backward before he landed and skidded.

Cadence wanted to stay and help, or maybe just stay and watch, but she needed to respect the effort he was giving. She ran, following the bird carrying Paytah, with Dietrich right behind her. If all the calculations were right—if, if—Pineapple would be able to get away soon, because security would have what they wanted and wouldn't be concerned with him.

She ran out the opening the troll had provided.

Pineapple found them that night, just before midnight. He was bloody and clumsily bandaged, though his smile said that said the fun of the fight hadn't worn off.

"Stupid damn corp sec," he said as he wandered into the back room of a bar in Tarlabasi that had old mattresses that would hold them for a night. "I pretty much had to do everything but point at the unconscious woman and say 'Oh no, she has our chip and can't move' or some drek like that to get them clued in. The second wave finally figured it out after giving me a little hassle, and they dragged her away, finally realizing they had what they wanted." He turned to Paytah. "How are you doing?"

"Not bad, considering I had to rely on Dietrich's healing spells. I'll be mobile in the morning."

"Good," said Cadence. "Because we'll need to move in the morning. I imagine they started examine the chip as soon as they got it. With any luck, they're still working on the encryption, but it's not my best job because I had to do it on the fly. Sometime around midnight, they'll figure out it's a fake. Then they'll come looking for us. They'll probably torture poor Mr. Johnson again to get more info, but I doubt they'll use the voice impersonation trick again. They know we'd be on to it this time."

"I don't suppose anyone lifted any certified credsticks off Cagri after she went down?" Paytah asked. Three heads shook sadly.

"She probably didn't have any. Doesn't mean we won't be paid," Cadence said. "When Cagri checked on the chip, she got a little worm in her commlink. Since part of the plan thankfully called for knocking her out, she wasn't able to do anything about it immediately. By the time she came to, we had been paid. With interest. And a nice tip."

Dietrich shook his head. "How did you know how this was all going to go down?"

Cadence shrugged. "The great thing about con artists is they're so focused on winning their own game, they sometimes miss the line between playing and being played."

FAST AND LOOSE

POSTED BY: GLITCH

The trick of finding a focus for this posting is that cons pop up in almost every other type of job that we do. Sweet-talking a security guard, posing as a corporate employee, giving Mr. Johnson just enough information to make him think you're being honest—who among us hasn't done those things? Cons are our natural element, the air we breathe, the water we swim in. Writing about cons could easily be writing about everything that's a shadowrun.

Unless we focus and remember that "con" is short for "confidence." And it doesn't refer to the confidence you possess, but the confidence you persuade others to give you. If we can narrow our discussion that much, to cover how you win people over and get them to offer what you haven't asked for, we'll find we actually broadened it, because that sort of game isn't the sole purview of runners. Corp execs, government officials, and pretty much anyone else messing around with power is going to run some sort of con or another, because that's how you get things done when you can't go by the book but resorting to violence is unwise or uncouth.

We'll start our look at cons out, then, by getting a sense of the scope of the con game life, and some of the places where cons are especially hot. **Corporate Con Games** offers some insight into conning the Big Ten and what particular vulnerabilities they might have; **Strategic Maneuvering: Ares Going to War?** takes a deeper look at Ares and how they are responding to the crises that keep roiling the corp; **"Special" Election** turns the focus to government and the chaos surrounding the void left by Governor Kenneth Brackhaven stepping down in Seattle; **Spinrad's Perfect Storm** examines how Johnny Spinrad is trying to take advantage of the chaos enveloping the Big Ten to further his own ends; and finally **Prisons of Faerie Dust** offers mysterious missives from the newest hotspot of shadowrunning, the Seelie Court. Read all these through, and you'll have a better understanding of the ways cons are being used throughout the Sixth World—and what cons people might be trying to play on you.

CORPORATE CON GAMES

POSTED BY: PHARAOH

- I tapped Pharaoh to give me his worldly insight into con games in the realms of the megacorps. He dropped it to me in hopes for a slot on JP. I messaged him back a few hours later after I gave it a read but got null space in return. Grapevine eventually got me the lowdown on why. Seems a mark went full murder hobo and got some serious revenge after Pharaoh cleaned him out. Cons usually save us from excessive violence, but they aren't safe by any means. Out of respect I'm posting this raw. No edits, just pure Pharaoh honesty.
- Bull

I started running my first cons on my bitterly divorced parents when I was only four years old. In the divorce, they somehow thought that splitting me, their only child, right down the middle was a good idea. I'd spend a week with mom living in her corporate-provided apartment, then a week with dad living inside his corporate penthouse in the same skyraker. I learned early on how to game the system between them, and later I just applied the same skills to everything else. I ran the badger to coast my way through high school while stuffing my certified credsticks with a plethora of pig-in-a-poke variations. I only went to college because it opened a whole new pool of suckers to draw from, and while I never set foot in a single class, I graduated summa cum laude in three years. I took that degree to my next levels of higher education and ran the same cons with the same results on different dim marks. I should have ended with a doctoral degree in Bovine Fecal Matter, but instead I have a neat series of fancy diplomas that I threw out like junk mail when they sent them to me. My problem was I ran out of places in academia to do my work, and the cons were starting to get boring.

I wanted new games and new fish, so I looked to the biggest ponds I could find: megacorporations. And I've been working them ever since. Now, it's my chance to

pass on some of my wisdom so that new faces can slip into these big ponds and dupe these rich (and not-so-rich) suckers for all they're worth.

ARES

They're first up alphabetically, though they also happen to be the mega I've got the least to say about. Not because they're not a good place to run cons, but because I stopped running mine there almost twenty years ago. This is where I started, and while I could have just popped back in at some other arcology or subsidiary, I decided instead to keep my distance. That means, outside of the rumor mill and several contacts I still work, I don't necessarily know what's going on inside.

I will point out that since the Excalibur thing and with all the bug spirit rumors going on this place is ripe for some rain making, salting, or romance runs. There's a lot of pride inside Ares and a lot of reputation to keep up. Their youngest and brightest aren't always the latter, and they can easily be pushed in the right direction by a smooth smile or some batted eyelashes.

- Fortunately, we have another source to fill in what Phoenix doesn't know. Check in farther down the post for a more detailed write-up of what's happening in Ares.
- Glitch

AZTECHNOLOGY

I am well-versed in the darker side of what is the most-loved megacorporation on the planet, and let me just say that the folks who are running this massive worldwide snowjob are some of my idols. They have the entire world looking one way while they're over there sacrificing children to their rain gods at public ceremonies, and no one says a thing.

This complete lack of perceivable morals makes a lot of standard con tactics useless. You can't blackmail someone over something that all the people around them do; and you certainly can't try to blackmail with public release because Aztechnology has no problem running a quick load of laundry. A little wash to clean up the problem, some spin to lighten the load, and then a quick run through the dryer to clear up any residual dampness, such as the pesky con artist who started it all.

It's all that PR though that opens up some internal strife that those with the right social skillset can manipulate to their advantage. Spin works on the masses, but it tends to leave a select few behind. Those unfooled few, who were too close to be lied to, had a direct involvement, or are just really nosey fraggers, are the place to hit with Spanish prisoner, false protection, idol worship, or a nice blood from a turnip. Just remember to know your mark. The targets inside Aztechnology aren't morally aligned to the rest of the world and even more so, they aren't morally aligned to the average conman. We use words as weapons, and most of us have a pretty strong aversion to murder. Hell, most of the grifters I know can't stand violence of any sort. Azzies grow up watching courtball with no censorship edits based on violence. They become quickly accepting that sometimes the best way to the goal is right through their opponent.

On a non-con note, I may have picked up an insider view of some major plays going down while working a dirty dutchman on a down-on-his-luck exec. This guy had no problem opening up access to some rather secure files just to get some (possibly incorrect) insider info on his competition. How I got the info isn't important. What's important is what it says about the direction of Aztechnology. The materials I saw should keep the shadows of NorthAm hot while also making some worldwide markets interesting.

The broad stroke puts Aztechnology looking to be the new face of America, a unified north and south. Their fellow Americorps—Ares, NeoNET, and Horizon—have all seen better days. Ares' difficulties, NeoNET's implosion, and Horizon's PR blunder in Amazonia and the chaos around Yellowstone have left the Americas without a reliable megacorporation to bring their interests to the Corporate Court and to look out for them against the Japanacorp bloc and big bad Saeder-Krupp. Aztechnology is playing a giant con game to make Americans see them as the megacorp with their interests in mind. And for this, they're running the shadows to make every other megacorp with a home on American soil look like they're managed by morons.

- He forgot to mention Spinrad. While European for now, NeoNET's collapse has Johnny on the verge of gaining the newest iconic American structure, NeoNET's ARCHology, in St. Louis. These two are playing out their fights in American and European shadows to keep Spln from looking American.
- Fianchetto

In South America, Aztechnology is putting up a strong military show, much to the oohs and aahs of the locals. This show is strengthening their place in South-Am, but that's not the purpose of the military buildup. Aztechnology has its sights set on Antarctica. While that frigid continent is a strange place to be talking about conquering, Aztechnology boardrooms all over the world are talking about it behind closed doors. There's something there that they want, and they're willing to put boots on the ground in order to solidify their control. This means a resource war of some kind, and grifters can always work a good resource rush. We learned that after the comet in the early '60s when whole new generation of swindlers had to come up and fill the gap from the number of griftmasters who retired on bogus orichalcum money.

- If the Azzies try to claim Antarctica, they're going to have a whole world of corps and countries pummeling them. We're reading a con right here.
- Balladeer

- Actually, if Aztechnology builds facilities in Antarctica, they're extraterritorial. They belong to the corp. They already do this all over the world; thick ice and brutal cold doesn't change the accords.
- Icarus

Plenty of guys like me made a killing over these past few years working the issues surrounding the fear of a global food shortage. Whether it was playing the corporate boardrooms convincing the suits that the people we represent have the solution or playing among the hunger-filled masses to better our place in the world, we made a lot of moves and money thanks to Sirrurg the Psycho-dragon burning NatVat facilities to the ground. Recently, a new food substitute, currently called NutriPaste, was developed by NuFood Inc. Through the normal channels (shadowrunners), that priority formula found its way to Aztechnology. The Azzies are smart enough to not just relabel it and call it theirs. Instead, they are doing some reverse engineering. In the meantime, they are working to sabotage the reputation of NuFood, so that when they release their world-saving new foodstuff, they don't need to worry about pesky legal claims.

- If you haven't heard of NuFood, Inc., don't feel bad. They're a food-research company that started as a university think-

tank in South Africa. They've submitted several alternative food products for ghouls, in hopes of gaining the bequest from Dunkelzahn's Will. You can bet that this new food source likely has some connection to that gruesome research, and the Azzies don't want to suddenly find out their new product is not-so artificial people meat.

- Frosty

EVO

I'm having a grand ole time with these guys lately. They're trying to make so many big changes in a short time, they've got holes that even a weak grifter can exploit opening up faster than sinkholes after a summer Kentucky storm. This is the place to go if you want to run any kind of Worried Wally con, since folks inside are squirming with the fight for the top seat, all this CFD/monad nonsense, and their huge rebranding effort.

All over Evo there are opportunities to play on the fears and confusion being created by these changes. This isn't a game for rookies or lazy Lindas who want to coast through a score. These are dangerous waters, since the players can wreck your life. The top dogs will have no qualms about turning a caught con man to their ends, and believe you me, these guys are top con artists in their own right. The only way to make it to the top of the corporate heap is through cunning and cons. As for the monads, well, you can lose a lot more than some cash when they decide it's better to overwrite you than to let you walk. Adding some con skills to the pool of monad abilities is probably near the top of their to-do list anyway. It would be on mine if I was a body-stealing artificial intelligence that, while publicly exposed, still needs to hide its existence, else it gets lynched.

Thanks to the big moves, Evo is also rife with opportunities to scam the skeptics and prey on the doubters. Phony CFD protection and cures are already a strong go-to for professional sharps working the ranks of Evo. Even if it's just a quick in or a fast cash turnaround, Evo citizens are suckers for these scams. Higher up the corporate chain, the desires are still there. They're just as likely to buy a cure or protection, but they have a lot more nuyen to toss in the kitty. We can play them against their rich counterparts, and when it all comes down to a false positive, these guys are much easier to walk into a true Lion's Leap. When they've got a lot to lose, it's easier to play them, though remember it also means they have a lot more resources to come down on you and anyone you know.

The same politics that are making the con games here at Evo so interesting are also wreaking havoc on the shadows. This quest for a new CEO has gone on for far longer than anyone expected because the candidates are taking this contest deadly serious and no one seems to be ready to accept the giant bulls-eye victory is going to place on them. Each of the candidates (I know some of the basics were covered in the *Market Panic* download) is vying for the top spot, not only in the boardroom, but also on the streets and in the shadows. They're working against each other and for themselves in markets all over the world. To avoid turning the whole thing into a bloodbath, they use a lot more of us talkers than the gunbunny types in these operations because they want to protect the overall bottom line and rep of the corp, while only damaging their opponents.

The current favorite is Ysil. That's the naga. Thanks to the seeds of fear being sewn about the questionable agenda of the monads alongside some distrust for the status quo and a lot of pity tactics using images of nagas being flayed around the world, Ysil has gone from a dark horse to a front runner. Nearly all of those events were orchestrated by Ysil using master social engineers.

- Don't discount the other choices. Strato still has a lot of support, as do Dacopral and Bills. The only one out of the game is Kala, from what we've seen. The nartaki seems to have thrown his support behindYsil. Part of the reason the naga is in the lead.
- Plan 9

There are few better places in the world for a grifter to work than in the middle of a major re-imaging campaign for one of the Big Ten. While Evo isn't the biggest of the big, there are still a plethora of places for cons with all this MetaSkindustries rebranding. Personally I think it's a waste. Those loyal to Evo are going to stay loyal—I've seen that over and over—but those who aren't loyal to a brand already don't really dig into who's behind their brand, and they don't really care. If they don't have any particular loyalty, they aren't going to boycott Evo. All the name changes and logo swaps are leaving some cracks and gaps for good grifters to use, and the runs against these new lines by corps looking to smack Evo while they're down are paying off with minimal bloodshed.

- MCT has been doing a lot of contracting against Evo recently. I'm not sure if it's about settling old scores or just trying to keep an opponent down, but the work is good and abundant if your available around the Pacific Rim.
- Mihoshi Oni

I know some of you skags are going to claim I'm salting a grift, but that's not the case. This is just me sharing some data I may have picked up while working something related to Evo and CFD. A research facility located in Boston was on the verge of a cure for CFD when the drek hit the fan. The reports that I saw pointed to the Deep Resonance, that place the technomancers talk about, as a location for this cure. The documents I saw mentioned a technomancer forming a connection the DR and using a set of clean nanites to rewrite the original personality back into the victim's head after they had long been lost to CFD. It was a lot more complicated

than my simple explanation, but the point is not how or where it was done, but simply that it was done at all. Expect to see work headed into the Boston quarantine to find the data there or jobs to hit some of Evo's other research facilities to see if they have figured it out—again.

- I understand that the bodies of many are stolen. But do two wrongs really make a right? The monad may have taken the body originally, but it was a random event where someone was exposed to their nanites. This is specifically killing that entity in order to get the body back.
- Plan 10

- We've already heard the rumors that these monads can get re-uploaded as code. Once they've reloaded, giving the body back to the rightful owner just seems like the right thing to do.
- Butch

A conversation about Evo wouldn't be complete these days without talking about Mars and the monads. They are supposed to be departing at the end of this year, but it looks like they are delaying due to some political issues dirtside. The monads are claiming the ship is prepared, and many monads are already present and ready to go, but politics here on Earth have kept many monads from being able to join their fellow body-snatchers on board their massive exodus vessel. The problems fall primarily into one of four major categories: corporate citizenship, unlawful detention, pressure tactics, and terrorist attacks.

Some corps don't care whose mind is inside; they care about the proprietary data inside that mind, and they aren't willing to let their employees simply leave. This has meant a lot of extractions, but not every monad has the means and connections to set that up. There are a few teams in major NorthAm sprawls that have been tracking down monads who need out and offering their services to them. This also means there have been con artists doing the same without any intention of fulfilling the deal.

If it isn't the corps that grab them, it's the government. Often the government is at odds with a corp because they want their citizen back, and the nations are claiming that being a monad negates your former legal status. Whether true or not, I don't care. It's an angle to play—and a good one. I've played both sides against the middle and just took the money and let the details get sorted out by the wronged parties. I'm not a mediator, I'm a grifter.

Pressure tactics and terrorist attacks kind of go together, but I like to separate people who protest and try to chase off transports headed to the spaceports from those who actively attack and bomb incoming craft. The monads are hiring protection and looking to do some preemptive research in an effort to keep their fellow monads safe. Every time a bomb goes off to kill some monads, it just makes the world angry at the monads instead of the crazy hoopholes who are bombing people in the first place.

All of this has lead to delays in the launch. The monads aren't being specific as to when they'll be launching, but they are still using flexible runners to provide security and some investigative skills to fend off attacks while they are still in this solar system. Not sure how smoothly grifting monads would go, but I'd be up for the challenge.

HORIZON

Grifters con their whole life and still never feel they are ready to take on the Deep Horizon. Though the mega has only been around for a short time, they already have a job named after them. This is both an honor and a sign of the utter terror that working inside and against Horizon instills in most grifters. If you aren't scared of Horizon, you're either too stupid or too crazy, and either way your career is in severe risk of a short life. The Deep Horizon is all about being the best con artist among the other great con artists.

Horizon is best known for being the "face" megacorp. With this concentration of social engineers, and social engineer wannabes, getting a con to run smoothly is tough. One can never be sure if the person you're talking to is being straight or is simply looking at you as a potential mark, while you are sizing them up the same way. And all of this is going on up front. Behind the scenes is where the real testing is done.

This corp is the ultimate challenge for con artists looking to prove they're the best, especially since the money isn't amazing. It has several layers of security and personnel, and all of that is before you run into the fact that the Consensus is monitoring every interaction between the employees.

This place doesn't support the mid-length con. Short cons can get in under the radar and be done before the Consensus starts shifting opinion against you or even notices the effects of your work. Long cons can be worked to try to fool the Consensus, or even use it to the grifter's advantage if they can play a large enough crowd to influence poll results and get their own HIP status bumped up.

It's that HIP (Horizon Internal Persona) status piece that hurts most grifters trying to work Horizon from the inside. When they first come on, they start at the bottom of the HIP heap. Since the Consensus reboot, those of us working inside have had a chance to build up our HIP alongside everyone else, and it's paid off for a lot of grifters. I know at least six former pros who have now just settled into the place they earned themselves. That won't be the case much longer and every grifter slipping into the Horizon ranks will need to play the long game and get their HIP up so they can interact with the big money players.

External jobs aren't easy either. Horizon's use of the HIP system for upward mobility means people inside the corp are savvy to their personal status and every employee at Horizon knows how to play the game. It's like a company full of con men trying to work each other to get ahead. Even citizens who don't "work" or work at menial labor jobs are far more socially savvy than your average runner.

- I'd take offense to that if I didn't know it was true. And you can probably bump "average runner" up to "eighty percent of runners." I've heard stories of street sams getting worked right into a security station by janitors that know how to talk.
- Picador

Even if the Consensus weren't tracking every move, Horizon has a cadre of the best deep-cover operatives—basically long-term con men—on the planet, who don't limit their work to outside Horizon, the Dawkins Group. While most runners worry about security special operators like the Red Samurai or FireWatch, they never see the Dawkins Group coming. That's what makes them scary. You don't get a chance to go toe-to-toe—you simply find yourself in a compromised position, and it's over. They work you like any other con artist, and if they're good, you think it's your fault.

Thanks to a file acquisition from a lonely housewife who likes sleeping up the HIP ladder, I know the Dawkins Group has long term operators inside Ares, NeoNET, MCT, and the Seattle Metroplex government. I'm sure they have people everywhere, but these are known. I have notes on their purposes.

At Ares they are working the other side of the social-support deal while trying to push Ares toward the CAS and away from the UCAS. They're looking for Ares to play a bigger part in St. Louis and hopefully relocate their headquarters down to Atlanta, Richmond, or even New Orleans. These are big tasks for singular individuals, but I'd lay a small wager on success because I know the skill level of these corporate grifters.

Horizon sees NeoNET's collapse as a chance for cheap expansion. Their Dawkins operative is working to push assets toward Horizon as they collapse. This would seem easy, but the internal politics of NeoNET aren't pretty. The sharks are smelling blood, and it's a feeding frenzy. I actually met this operative once, and he's one of the more violent of our kind. He doesn't commit the violence himself, but he uses a lot of runners to push and scare marks into position. Then the chaos breaks out.

MCT's seat at the top is something Horizon has no hope of ever getting. They know this. They also know that MCT's rise did not occur without the fall of many others. The Dawkins agent I know about within MCT has worked to feed intelligence back to Horizon on MCT's targets during their rise, so that Horizon could take a few pieces for themselves from the bits left behind when the great white shark that is MCT chomps down on its prey. Now that MCT is firmly in place at the top, the operative is spying from the inside on their Pacific Rim opponent. Horizon has no hope of bringing down MCT, but by holding their own against a megacorp that out-masses them tenfold, they gain a lot of Corporate Court cred.

Last, but certainly not least, is the Dawkins agent who is working within Seattle's government, in particular focusing on the current election. She has been working overtime lately in efforts to get a new governor favorable to CalFree and Horizon. Aztechnology has long been the PR powerhouse in Seattle thanks to their pyramid and spotless reputation. Everyone loves Stuffer Shack! Horizon wants a better in with their coastal neighbor, and a Horizon-friendly governor would certainly go a long way in making that happen.

Beyond the Dawkins crew, and just an overall piece of Horizon action people can be on the lookout for, are the meetings and conversations that have been going on between members of the Pueblo Corporate Council Board of Directors and the top dogs at Horizon. The corporate nation already shares some territory with the megacorp, and if the two were to combine, they would be a NorthAm powerhouse with a distinctly different feel than most are used to. While Ares, and recently NeoNET, have been the corporate faces of North America, they are distinctly Anglo. The PCC may be Anglo-friendly, but they are still a Native American Nation. That's probably the biggest sticking point that Horizon has to face. Back when Horizon gained AAA status, a lot of PCC citizens became Horizon citizens—most of whom were Anglo. Horizon made some noise about promoting and sustaining Native culture within the corporation, but they did not dedicate any substantial resources to such initiatives, and more and more they seem willing to let the culture they already have overwhelm the cultures they brought in. They would like to build on their position to make themselves into the dominant NorthAm corporation, and the PCC's positive relationship with the CAS would certainly give the, a leg up. Plus, we've got Ares looking at the CAS and working with Horizon on their image. What becomes of all this and how both Horizon and Ares will position themselves once all the various events shake out will certainly bear watching.

- These events are burning up the shadows all over North America. The other NAN countries are getting run on to keep them looking at Aztlan as the bad guys and promote a PCC-Horizon merger as good for all the NAN. Seattle is hot, as Horizon works to promote their governor, make sure the government doesn't feel threatened by a Horizon-PCC merger, and give Aztechnology something to focus on up here and away from LA and the PCC, not to mention the CAS. In the CAS things are nova-hot as everyone vies for support in one way or the other. Even the UCAS is getting some heat because of Ares in Detroit

and the plays in St. Louis. Horizon is a little fish, but they are making some big waves.

- Mika

MITSUHAMA COMPUTER TECHNOLOGIES

Big money draws big cons, and nowhere is there bigger money than Mitsuhama right now. While NeoNET is a great place to prey on the fears and hollow promises of its bailing masters for the easy money, MCT is the biggest on the block now, and that makes it the place to pull off that career-ending score. Problem is, it could be career ending because you're dead, but that's always a risk. The rewards one can line up here, though, can be worth a big risk.

MCT actually got their new spot by doing just what we do, but on a grander scale. The Megacorporate Revision had all the A- and AA-rated megas shaking in their boots because they feared losing their status. MCT preyed on this fear and started pushing them to make deals that were far more beneficial to MCT than to the smaller corps, but the littler guys got enough out of the deal that they felt good about it. It's a classic Tennessee snakeskin.

The thing is, now that they're under the MCT umbrella they're realizing that, along with a lot of others, they got conned. Now, they didn't get swindled out of a fortune and left for broke, but they did take a big ole bruise to their massive egos when they realized they were pulled in so easily. Plenty of these executives are now less than happy with their new management, and that just sets them up for a pony ride, or better yet, a west coast player. Between their level of ego and greed, these guys should really just keep a pile of certifieds in their desk drawer to hand over to the grifters that roll in.

Con artists won't just be coming in to try and take advantage of the new size and money at MCT. This size, the new acquisitions, and the bloat of excess citizens that the company is going to need to trim is going to provide a lot of internal work as execs make moves against their competition and the masses try to save their livelihood. I don't know a lot of hooding grifters, but there are enough, and MCT is going to be their pot of gold for the foreseeable future. Those grifters are going to need support, too. The one thing about hooders is that they often start the game from a weak position and need a little extra support to get momentum on the con. This means runners who can follow directions and push the right buttons on the right people at all the right times. One wrong move could easily shatter a hooding grift.

Besides being at the top, MCT is also the head of what all the other corporations call the New Japanacorp Bloc. Back when the Big Ten were the Big Eight, it was Mitsuhama, Fuchi, Renraku, Shiawase, and Yamatetsu dominating the Corporate Court. Fuchi fell long ago, and Yamatetsu exiled itself and became Evo, but MCT, Renraku, and Shiawase have stuck around. This trio, as numbers one, three, and five in the Corporate Court rankings, has a combined value greater than all the other megacorporations combined, and three of the ten seats on the Corporate Court. During the '50s and '60s, they watched their strength dwindle as members were lost, but the '70s saw a shift in mentality. With far more of their wealth outside of Japan than within, they saw the opportunity to maintain their nations cultural mores while also working to be the biggest corporations on the planet. Within the borders of Japan, they work against each other tirelessly. Outside the Land of the Rising Sun, they work as a unified front against all comers. This has been a big part of MCT's rise to the top of the corporate heap. Their list of opponents has seriously dwindled over the last decade. Renraku and Shiawase are part of their bloc; NeoNET and Evo have been hit and reeling from events tied to CFD; Ares has been focused on their internal struggles; Saeder-Krupp, their biggest rival, has been dealing with the aftermath of the Dragon Civil War and has been way off their game; and the little guys like Horizon and Wuxing just aren't real competition. This has left only Aztechnology, and the size disparity of the AAAs is huge, even between spots one and four, and it is only getting worse. But the Japanacorps, with MCT at the forefront, are working to widen that gap.

That was a lot of babbling. My point here is that this bloc mentality has them feeling protected from a lot of opposition, while a good grifter can always sew some seeds of discord. Corporate executives, Japanese or not, are sharks by nature, and they are shrewd enough to know that a double-cross is always possible (though execs tend to be experts at shading the truth so as to avoid outright lies while still not being anything close too honest). The distrust and skepticism that results is where you can target MCT and the other two Japanacorps outside of Japan. Knowing some of the action inside Japan also helps, because it provides a solid foundation or connection to the cons running around the world.

NEONET

These guys are bleeding con money like an arterial spray. The executives know what's coming, and they're grasping at every straw tossed in front of them. The citizens are being kept in the dark, but every outside source is suddenly looking at them with those pity-filled eyes and offering them tips on places to jump ship or get support once their corporate SIN goes belly up and they are ruled by a government again. Some are dumb, and we can play just about any simple con on the dumb. I'm still making money off the trapped traveler and Nigerian poorboy scams, even though the Matrix should make these things impossible. The slightly brighter ones are getting scared, and within those ranks we find the marks that make us both runner money and con money. These corporate sheep are the

ones we can work with practically no lead up and get them to let us walk a team of hardened criminals right into a corporate HQ. Runners are happy to throw a little of their hard-earned nuyen into the account of a good con artist that can get them in without a shot fired. Out too, but that usually takes joining up and going in, and most grifters I know don't want that kind of exposure or risk. Better to walk the team in and then slip out the back before the shooting and explosions start.

Up the corporate ladder, we grifters are tagging marks faster than a nova-hot decker practicing at his local Soybucks. They know what's going down: them. NeoNET's fate is sealed. The details aren't fully released, but they are about to take the brunt of the punishment stemming from CFD and Boston. The Corporate Court is going to piecemeal anything left over to use as remunerations for the damages they caused. It looks like an end-of-year announcement about the truth of Boston as well as the dissolution of NeoNET. In the meantime, it's all about wheeling and dealing.

Executives are looking for ships to jump to, getting creative with start-ups, and running risky projects in order to make them more valuable to other corps when the teardown comes. Plenty of them are jumping early, but most want to make sure they are getting the best deal.

That means greed.

And greed means grifter bait!

Cons are way up as grifters work the fancy tailor, Calfree sweetheart, and east coast exchange on these fleeing rats. The patient ones are going to be in a much better place after the grifters take apart their competition with phony offers and false promises. Runners are getting pulled in as support, especially on fake extractions, but they need to be morally flexible in most cases, as the job usually ends with dumping an exec in the slums or in a hole once they've paid the tab.

In the boardroom and on the streets, most of the rumors are pointing toward Spinrad to get Villiers' golden ticket, JRJ International. Employees of JRJ are sitting pretty, knowing they'll go for a good price, but if Villiers waits too long, that asset is going to get tossed to the wolves, and who knows who will come up with it then. Johnny is not solely focused here. The fact that Spinrad seems to also be looking elsewhere in the world might be a play against Villiers, or just a sign of Johnny's short attention span sending him off after something else more exciting. That is one man I'd love a shot to run a con on. He seems fairly savvy, but he's so unpredictable—it would be a great challenge.

While everyone is focused on JRJ since it's tied to the Corporate Court seat, the Transys-Erika chunks of NeoNET are getting a short reprieve to get themselves set up for the breakdown. Celedyr and Malmstien are just as savvy as Villiers, and both of them can see their place in the Big Ten slipping away. While both of these top executives aren't going to get grifted any time soon, the executives under them are making a lot of big, flashy moves in order to get noticed by these two, so they can go with them when they cut and run. Both are going to be successful in whatever's next.

Celedyr looks like he'll head back to Europe and go back to focusing on research. A lot of rumors abound about what status they'll end with after the Corporate Court is done, but I don't think the dragon cares. Celedyr was always more about his research than corporate politics, and if he needs to, he can always pull some draconic strings for some favors from Lofwyr and S-K.

Malmstien has kept a low profile with the moves he's doing with Erika, but it looks like they've severed most ties to Transys and shifted their focus off of Europe and onto Africa completely. Their focus is so intense, Erika has made a huge move to gain control of both the Kilimanjaro Mass Drivers from their respective owners. For the past few years, Renraku and Mitsuhama have each claimed proprietorship of the KMD based on their Japanacorp relationships, and in truth MCT has been the primary operator for the north tube and Renraku the south. They both made deals with the local spirits and were having little trouble with them of late. Both megacorps accepted offers from Erika to take over their side of the facility and provide them with super-cheap launch costs for the remainder of the century.

Why? Not a damn clue. Erika is not a space-asset corp, and with a completed space elevator, the KMD seems much less valuable. They've got something up their sleeves, and that means runs. Work in Africa is going to get Africa-hot real soon.

RENRAKU

I'm a big fan of work inside the new Renraku because it's an inroad into such a huge pool of potential suckers. And you know they're gullible because they fell for whatever bulldrek line the big red is giving them, but maybe that's just grifter jealousy. Renraku is working some magic right now. Around the world, service and logistics contracts are going to Renraku based on a smooth calypso rhythm that they seem to have pulled using a lot of this Japanacorp bloc talk. The fact that they are ranked as the number three megacorporation in the world, and yet their strategy of decreasing their global brand market infiltration for local rebrands is playing out well for them, even though it looks to me like nothing more than a hometown hustle.

I tip my hat to those at the top, but for those of us looking to get in, it's relatively easy. Renraku is having so much growth, and in such strong need of quick thinkers who know how to turn an opinion, they might want to just post all their job openings to a hustler forum. We're exactly what they need, though maybe they'd want to tweak the moral flexibility and complete lack of corporate loyalty.

Grifters who know the Renraku swagger can use it to start working jobs using Renraku's rep. A few quiet insin-

uations without really saying who you represent can go a long way. Providing some support-service evaluations for free—that is, looking to see how Renraku could make their operations smoother and more streamlined—is a great way to get free rein of a site for a little while.

Their new brands provide a great cover as well, since no one knows most of them yet, but they know Renraku is rebranding for smaller markets. A good con artist can claim they're a rebrand, work themselves in to get a deal for their market with some upfront money, and then disappear into the woodwork. A few commcalls to a local Renraku branch after their product isn't coming in lets them know they were duped, but by that point we're a few jobs down the road.

Renraku is already well-known for their arcologies, which can be seen all over the world. The horrors of the SCIRE in Seattle, a.k.a. the ACHE, née Renraku Arcology, are a distant memory and we have since seen a global Matrix upheaval that made what happened there look like little more than a localized glitch. Our new Matrix, global and gridded, seems safer, leaving people feeling more comfortable. Renraku already controls where their cars drive, where their boats sail, and soon, where their planes fly thanks to the upcoming SkyGuide system. No one will notice, local governments will still have some semblance of control, but the reason this relates to the talk of the SCIRE is the computing power and programs behind the systems. Renraku is using their arcologies around the world as the computing cores for a unified transportation system. GridGuide, HarborGuide, and SkyGuide will all operate through a single network of powerful servers. All of this will be controlled by an advanced program that could be quite troublesome if it somehow makes that hop over to sentience gap and becomes an AI.

While the other corps seem placated by the deals they've made through the Corporate Court regarding this, the anarchists of the world are not so trusting. Work is coming in against arcologies around the world, looking to place killswitch codes in the systems in case of AI troubles. Along with these forward thinkers, there are also those who are just hiring bashers to break these systems upfront.

- That's the problem with anarchists. They don't consider the effects of what they're doing. Killswitches and guerrilla warfare are the kinds of things that will make a young, newly forming AI turn into a paranoid global disaster.
- Plan 10

- Not if it doesn't live to get that big.
- Clockwork

- Point proven.
- Plan 10

SAEDER-KRUPP

I don't do much work against Saeder-Krupp because S-K Prime keeps too many tabs on S-K employees and those they associate with. This means grifters are tagged even if they don't try to slip into the S-K ranks. Along with this excess of big-brother monitoring, SK Prime is one of the harshest megacorps on the grifters they catch.

Because we are so good at getting people past human security, they do a lot of counter intel on con artists to reduce infiltrations and minimize security risks. If a known grifter is tagged even talking to a mark from S-K, Prime immediately tags them for local security surveillance. This is often the start for the most common of the cons run against S-K, the royal flush. The grifter will tag several marks and get S-K's security watching all these decoys while they make a move for a quick con on site. The security teams know something is coming, but they are so focused on the collection of marks, they're more lax when looking for the quick con.

Around the world, S-K is still quieter than usual. The Dragon Civil War distracted them for awhile and let MCT slip past them for the top spot. Or so Lofwyr wants everyone to think. Lofwyr is a con dragon. The move of MCT to the top has gotten focus off S-K up there, and he's using this distraction to prepare for some sleight of hand. We're all looking one way, and S-K is going to come up with something crazy. They already managed to complete the space elevator while everyone was looking out at Mars. What's next?

SHIAWASE

I have thought many times while working marks within Shiawase, "How have they held on for so long?" And the answer is simply that they are not holding on; they have always stood, and others have stood by them. MCT may be the biggest megacorp on the planet, but back home in Japan, they still bow down to Shiawase because they have the greater honor. Or so they did until the Empress slipped off the board and let the whole place go wild again. Well, not really wild, but it certainly is not as stable as it had been in recent years.

Speaking of recent years, my current favorite work inside Shiawase is playing both sides of this Coltrane vs. Kiyomoto nonsense. Coltrane had a great opportunity when he was deposed from the MIFD (Market Information & Forecasting Department, Shiawase's intel division) to take all that great insider info and use it out on the streets. He didn't even have to use it to hurt Shiawase—he could have used it to benefit them—but instead he has spent his time, effort, and considerable skill trying to damage Kiyomoto's reputation. And it goes both ways. These two grown men have been snipping at each other like house-training puppies, but with the resources of a megacorporation. I'm sure the runners who've made some nuyen aren't complaining, but Shi-

awase could have been elevated to such a better position if these two had just acted like grown-ups.

That said, I appreciate the number of kitten call, uptown slingblade, and johnny will-call cons that I've played a part in over the past three years thanks to these two. They leave a lot of openings for good grifters, both inside and outside the corp. I'm currently working a few marks on getting some Opulent Sushi franchises open around Seattle. The marks know that Shiawase doesn't allow them outside the Japanese Imperial State, but thanks to some creativity on my part, they think that is about to change, and they're ready to invest heavily.

WUXING

Working against Wuxing is a numbers game. Their large population gives a big pool of marks, but it also means they've got a lot of low-level distributed wealth and a ton of steps to get past before you get to the real money. Then you add in the fact that Wuxing is a bit ethnophobic, which puts some limitations while adding some extra plays for the grifts that can be run within the corp.

The corporate preference for "celestial" bloodlines, to use an antiquated phrase, may keep many grifters from working the upper echelon, but it opens doors all over the rank-and-file around the world. Corporate devotion, a pretty universal principle in any mega, played against a healthy dose of ethnic discrimination, softens a lot of Wuxing marks. It's one of the rare times that being an outsider inside Wuxing is beneficial. It's much easier to play a con about being passed over for promotion because my ancestors were "x" when you both fit the bill.

The easiest line of cons inside Wuxing revolve around their strong spiritual affinity. Playing cons against those who desire the favor of the spirits is the easiest pitch, especially with those who lack any true affinity for the arcane. Even a rookie shyster can play a fairly straight con inside Wuxing by just picking the right mark and utilizing their ignorance. They want success and with a little variation on the old salted mine, even a weak grifter can make a buck off that blind faith.

Around the world Wuxing is chugging along like they always have, under the radar and maximizing profits by avoiding conflicts. They play the quiet game—much like a grifter. Let others make noise while they make money. Their preferred method of operation, though, may be shaken up soon.

Diviners within Wuxing are all talking about the shared vision that had on August 8. Each reported a similar divining dream where four pillars surrounded by a swirling black smoke were shaking and crumbling the globe they held above them. They all translated their similar visions to refer to the Wu quintuplets, who turn eighteen next year. The pillars are symbols for four of them; the black smoke is the fifth. This auspicious occasion might mark some kind of calamity for Wuxing, or it may be the rise of these five powerful figures to something greater.

Eyes that are turned toward Wuxing are looking to see what the quintuplets are doing now, what others are doing for them, and what all of these efforts could mean in the near future.

- Nothing good. That's what they're up to. Wuxing has had a long run of good luck, and it's about to run out when these five brats reach adulthood and start wreaking havoc on the corp.
- Ma'fan

- Wisps of black smoke lack the strength to hold the others together.
- Man-of-Many-Names

... AND THE REST

I'll wrap with just a quick mention of the best targets on the planet for cons: A- and AA-rated megacorps. With the Megacorporate Revision still tossing out new ratings, every one of these corps is ripe for cons of every facet. The corps that are trying to bunch up and challenge the AAAs are showing they're scared of the Corporate Court, and that fear can be played. And not just played for the long cons, but also short ones to get things done quick and dirty for con artists and shadowrunners alike.

The mergers that are being pushed past boards and CEOs who don't have time to really look what they're getting into are leaving a lot of dissatisfaction on both sides after the fact, and the grift is on once that kind of gap opens up. These corps are merging without enough time to determine whose department does what and leaving a lot of free space for people to slip between the cracks, or even climb those cracks right to the top.

Top grifters are starting to work as fixers on the side and contracting out jobs to runner teams where they know a good con can get them access to scads of paydata because these merged, or pre-merger firms are just full of security holes ready for exploitation.

STRATEGIC MANEUVERING

ARES GOING TO WAR?

POSTED BY: STICKS

- I know this doesn't quite fit the theme of this file, but after reviewing it, I felt it necessary to disseminate it because it could have repercussions throughout the shadows. Ever since the *Market Panic* file went active, Sticks has gone completely dark. Given his line of work, that's

not uncommon. But then ten hours ago, I received this little gem from one of his dead-drop accounts tagged "*URGENT.*" If true, it gives some interesting data about what's going on with Ares. I can't verify any of the data, or even if he sent it. All I can say is that it came from one of Sticks' active accounts. Although he rambles a bit in places, I think we should give it a bit of credence until we find definite contradictory evidence. Either way, I think this is something we need to keep a careful eye on.

- Glitch

It's been a busy few months.

With my skills and level of contacts, steady work over the last few years has become the norm. Yay for me. And yeah, most of the work has come straight from Detroit. And without sounding too smug, they're the kind of jobs that pay with numbers ending in a lot of zeros. But after completing several back-to-back jobs, I couldn't help but notice certain things. But I blew them off. My usual M.O. is to concentrate on the job, nothing else, and definitely stay out of inter-corp pissing contests. But now ... I don't know if I can do that anymore. To be honest, I don't know about a lot of things right now.

Not to be melodramatic, but I broke one of my cardinal rules. And because of that, I've seen serious things in the past few months. Things that have made me question whether or not I want to continue my current business relationship with Ares. Some of these just don't make any sense. Others make too perfect sense—and they scare the drek out of me.

- Wait, is Sticks thinking about bailing from Ares, his number one cash-cow? He must really have seen something serious.
- Pistons

- I can think of only one thing that could truly scare him. But I'll hold my tongue for now.
- Hard Exit

- Assuming this is really him. Could be disinformation or a con—which would make it an appropriate entry in this file.
- Fianchetto

If what I'm seeing in an indication of what's coming, people need to know while I can still to report on it. Also, each job I'm getting is becoming progressively more dangerous, and I'm under the distinct impression that saying "no' to any of them isn't an option. So I'm either gonna get geeked on one of them (if I'm not already by the time Glitch posts this), or I'm gonna become yet another loose end that Detroit will need to tie up.

Well, now that the proper mood of intrigue and paranoia has hopefully been reached, let me tell you some of the drek I've noticed that's been doing down inside of Ares.

JUST ANOTHER JOB

It all started a few months ago with a call from one of my usual Ares Mr. Johnsons (yes *plural*). At this point, the jobs were standard stuff. You know, Private Wageslave decides to go AWOL and takes some company swag. Normally I'd be kind of insulted at such low-level stuff, but when Mr. Johnson mentioned the fees—well, let's just say any bruises to my sensibilities were quickly healed. Couple of weeks later, bam-boom, I'm flush for the next six months, and the generals in Detroit are happy. But was it a bit unusual to have so many desertions in such a short time frame? At the time, I addressed that question with copious amounts of top-shelf alcohol and decided I didn't care.

Then I got another trace job. Seems this particular Private Wageslave decided to leave his post (yeah, Ares' constant military lingo gets annoying) at the most inopportune time. And unlike the previous ones, he took some *very* sensitive company paydata with him. Everything was straightforward, no red flags during the pitch. Besides, it's not like data theft is an uncommon thing when corp employees bail, especially if they're going or being taken to another corp. But what got my attention was the payout for this job, a cool 50K, with a 25K bonus if I could secure the data or provide leads to track it down; dude had already leaked it on the Matrix.

He either royally slotted someone off or lifted some pretty sensitive stuff. Either way, not my problem or business. Mr. Johnson wanted him back and was paying handsomely; 'nuff said.

Took two weeks, but I eventually found the slag in a not-quite safehouse—in Toledo, of all places. Might have taken a bit longer if the fragger had been a little smarter, but stupid mark means easy job. After he woke up from his narcoject *siesta*, we had a nice chat about the lifted data. Sometimes the mark will try and negotiate, convince me of the justice of their cause or some drek and appeal to my better sense of humanity. Guess how well that usually works?

I can also tell when someone is scared out of their mind. People run for all sorts of reasons, none of which are my problem. And this guy was all but pissing his pants. So I **<1.8 mp deleted by Sysop>**

- To stave off the "when is he going to get to any real information" comments, I deleted some of Sticks rambling so that we could get to the point. Anyone who wants to read the unedited section, I'll send it to you.
- Glitch

... and then the mark said, "And with perfect unity will come perfect peace."

I almost had a heart attack. From there he started to say something I *think* was "perfect peace, my hoop-cheek" but I barely heard him. I was too busy listening to the blood pounding in my ears. Before I knew what I was doing, I had him pinned against the wall, demanding to

know where he heard that phrase. He said it was something one of the new executive VPs, a guy named Otto, liked to say during one of his many inspection tours of the main office. He thought it was just some stupid, trivial motivational nonsense.

The next day, the mark was on his way to meet with an associate of mine to vanish. And no, not as in kill. I also torched the safehouse, all the way to the foundation and told Mr. Johnson that's what I found. Of course, I didn't tell him that the mark's stolen data had been copied to my 'link. And of course, Mr. Johnson believed every word I said. Why wouldn't he? I was known for my loyalty to the corp. Even got a token 10K for my troubles.

I crossed a line that day, but it was only the first.

On the way back to my doss, I reviewed the copied data. I was hoping that I was wrong—praying, in fact. But sure enough, there was a vid file and there he was. No doubt about it. Initial rage turned to cool resolve. I didn't know what I was going to do at this point, but I was going to do something.

Because Otto Hendricks was still alive.

- Bingo.
- Hard Exit

- Why does that name sound familiar and why is my gut turning slightly?
- Pistons

- Doesn't ring a bell here.
- /dev/grrl

- That's because you weren't born when this slag was active. Ghost, I'd hoped to never have to hear his name again. *sigh* "Brother" Otto Hendricks, born 3/15/2017 *died* 5/21/2058 (but apparently not). He was one of the leading members of the Universal Brotherhood back in the '50s and head of the Chicago chapter before he was apprehended by the FBI for a laundry list of both mundane and magical crimes, all of which he was found guilty of and sentenced to death. Aside from being the head honcho in Chicago, it was discovered that he was in

charge of the process that merged dozens of unfortunate slags with bug spirits. He was responsible for at least thirty-five merges and at least a dozen additional attempts before his capture and eventual—supposed—execution. It was never released in the public record, but it was known that Hendricks was a powerful insect shaman. Anyone want to lay odds he and Sticks have some really ugly history?

- Bull

- Sucker bet. Yeah, *this* is something that would cause Sticks to go off the reservation, if he hasn't already.
- Slamm-0!

- I'd also like to point out, again, that nothing has been confirmed and this could be a ruse.
- Rigger X

LATERAL TRANSFERS?

But proof that Hendricks was still alive wasn't the only data that my mark, who I'll refer to as Bob from here on out, had stored on his 'link. Bob may have been a wageslave-private, but he was smart enough to realize that some weird stuff of the first degree was going down at the office. Too bad he wasn't smart enough to get away.

And how did he know or figure all this out? Well, you see Bob worked at Ares HQ in Detroit as part of a division that has access to virtually every part of the corporation. Bob was part of Human Resources.

- You've got to be bloody kidding me. How are we supposed to take this seriously?
- Chainmaker

- There's a reason that wageslaves and other corporate-types make good sources of information for people like us. Remember, we are the outsiders looking in, and they are the ones already in. Despite the stereotype, not all wageslaves are mindless drones.
- Mr. Bonds

With a BA in business management and a minor in accounting, Bob was one of the up-and-comers in HR and was being groomed for a nice, cushy, middle-management position within the next two years. Day in and day out he would comb through various personnel files from across not just HQ, but the corp worldwide. Hirings, firings, transfers—all of that was HR's responsibility. They had to make sure that the records were up-to-date and checked for accuracy, and also that the information got where it needed to go. Inaccurate records could eventually cost the corp thousands if not millions of nuyen if not properly maintained. And Bob was one of the best at keeping up the records.

But his problem was two-fold. One, he was a bit of an eager beaver and wanted that promotion sooner than later. And two, because of his accountant training, he couldn't help but notice certain patterns and in some cases irregularities within said books. So, like a private bucking for corporal, he let his ambitions get the better of him.

That was Bob's first big mistake.

It took a few long, agonizing, hours to explain the whole thing to me, but here's the short version of what Bob found and how. Each division or subsidiary in Ares has its own prefix number, and every project is assigned its own project number. For example, Ares Arms' (23) fragged-up Excalibur project was listed as 23-111976. Basically, it's inter-corp shorthand code. This way, even the grunts, like those in HR, can process the basic information and requests for even the most top-secret of projects without compromising security. The only thing a grunt may know is that 23-111976 has transferred three employees, promoted two, so that they can update that information in the system. They usually have no idea what 23-111976 represents, and they usually don't care.

But sometimes, people, especially in HR, are able to put two and two together and get a rough idea of what a project is about. Scuttlebutt usually plays a part of this as well. A lot of rocket scientists assigned to a project usually means the project has something to do with rockets.

- An attachment was also sent with this file and shows the raw data "Bob" was using; all 27,578 spreadsheet rows. If anyone wants to see it, let me know.
- Glitch

But then he started noticing that a number of employees who had received disciplinary action or less-than-satisfactory performance reviews were being transferred not to lower-rung positons or projects, but to one of the most classified, high-priority ones. Most of these individuals were, in Bob's assessment, also in no way qualified for such positons. According to Bob, he'd seen odder transfers. *Of all things*, he was concerned that with their elevated status, they should have had their corporate benefits packages updated. But they weren't. And one of the biggest projects, designated 40-120928, was receiving the lion's share of these transfers; all authorized by one Otto Stevens, a.k.a. Otto Hendricks.

- Not to sound like an alarmist, but I speak spreadsheet and went through Bob's data. After correlating it along with my own special touches, I'm ninety percent certain that 40-120928 is none other than Project: Pyro, which was reportedly shut down with prejudice after the death of Nick Aurelius.
- Netcat

- Should we be surprised?
- DangerSensei

Like a good drone bucking for promotion, Bob continued working on his personal project on his own time, thinking he was showing good "proper initiative." But I realized that all he did was paint a target on his back. After about a month of digging, he started to see other patterns.

About this same time, scuttlebutt was flying fast and furious about the corporate HQ. Word was going around that with Arthur Vogel's return, he was gearing up for a showdown with Damien Knight. And of course, this caused a bit of a stir within the lower ranks as many people started, at least unofficially, to pick sides. But more on that later. Based on what he heard from other employees, Bob then started checking to see exactly who was being transferred to projects like 40-120928. Sure enough, a significant amount of them were those who were said to support Vogel.

When Bob heard that VP Stevens wanted to personally see him, he panicked and bolted with all the data he had. And we all know how that ended.

- So the malcontents and/or those with leanings toward supporting Vogel, people who have no qualifications to be involved with said project, are being transferred to it. And on top of this, said project may in fact be an ongoing Project: Pyro, the one that according to the *Market Panic* file was going to "fight fire with fire" in regards to the bugs. How many kinds of not good is this going to end up being?
- Bull

LINES IN THE SAND

After Bob was on his way to parts unknown, I went back to my normal routine. I didn't get any calls from my Detroit Johnsons for about three weeks. Not unusual, but that little voice in the back of my head, the one that usually helps keep me alive, said that something was wrong. Or maybe the revelation that Hendricks was still breathing was clouding my judgment. As much as I wanted to just let this go, to go back to the way I usually operated, I knew this time I couldn't. Like I said before, I'd crossed a line. So why not go a bit farther?

I started talking to my own contacts within Ares, under the guise of keeping in touch. I may be a cold-hearted ass, but I keep my contacts happy—or at least happy with me. Makes the job so much easier when people are willing to go out of their way for you.

I didn't find out much about Bob because—surprise, surprise—most of his records were now gone. But the troops in the trenches were more concerned about what they thought was the upcoming battle between Damien Knight and Arthur Vogel for control of Ares.

According to my contact in HR, who for the record had been instrumental in helping me find Bob, Vogel was starting to take a more proactive stance within the corp. Even before his vacation in space, Vogel was more reactive in the boardroom, mostly looking to act as sort of a balance between Knight's more aggressive stances and the rest of the board's reactive approaches.

But apparently almost being assassinated put some steel into Vogel's spine. Or maybe he had that installed. Anyway, during the most recent board meeting a couple of weeks ago, Vogel hammered away at Knight, criticizing his decisions to allocate more and more funding, personnel, and material to both Ares Arms and Knight Errant, who by all accounts don't need a damn thing, while other divisions such as Ares Consumer Products and Ares Services are starting to falter.

And according to my source, what was even more incredible was that Knight remained silent throughout the meeting and didn't even bother with an explanation or defend his decisions. He simply kept silent during Vogel's tirade and then called for a vote. Not surprisingly, it went in Knight's favor. Furious, Vogel left Detroit the next day and began a visit to Ares holdings worldwide on what he called a grand inspection tour.

- What, nothing from Aurelius or Daviar? That seems rather odd.
- Slamm-0!

- Lenny has been rather aloof of late, spending a lot of time at home. But he has had a lot of visitors lately. Scuttlebutt within Ares says that he may have health problems or has decided to just give up. Daviar, on the other hand, has been more preoccupied with Draco Foundation business of late, and she may think that Knight is just being Knight. Unless he does something radically different and/or stupid, I think everyone is gonna let Knight and Vogel slug it out and pick up the pieces when the dust settles.
- Cosmo

- Speaking of Aurelius' visitors, a lot of them are former CATCo employees, including a few *cough* former Seraphim.
- Fianchetto

- I wonder if this also has something to do with the increase in headhunters from Knight Errant making the rounds among the mercenary circles. I've lost at least six people to them in the past two months alone. I've also heard that Ares is getting ready to roll out new prime military contracts for any mercenary unit that wants to sign on, complete with terms at least one and a half times the standard rates and access to cutting-edge mil-spec weaponry. This is also odd because, relatively speaking, there are currently no major military hot-spots for such a buildup.
- Picador

- Anyone biting?
- Marcos

- None that I know of. The Excalibur debacle has not been forgotten. But a lot of lower-tier groups are seriously considering it.
- Picador

It's pretty much an open secret within the corp that Vogel is testing the waters, trying to see how much support he actually has. He's also been using the time to try and strengthen the positions among his allies as well as gain new ones. If this was an election, this would be Vogel's campaign trail.

- From what my own sources say, Vogel's tour has met with mixed results and being divided pretty much along expected lines. Ares Arms and Knight Errant are pretty locked-in with Knight as well as the other security companies. The other floundering divisions, such as Ares Consumer Services, have been a lot more receptive to Vogel's overtures because he pledged more direct support. The odd one out has been Ares Space; they seem to be split down the middle. Those working on contracts for the Space Rescue Service are leaning a bit more toward Knight, while some of the exploratory projects are leaning toward Vogel.
- Sunshine

- I have it on good authority that Clayton Wilson told Vogel, in no uncertain terms, to "go fuck yourself."
- Hard Exit

While I don't have an exact itinerary, I was able to finagle a few details as to where Vogel may be going. What exactly this means down the road I have no idea, but I know everyone here may be able to dig something up. Right now Vogel is concentrating on Ares holdings in North America but has several planned stops in the CAS. From there, he's expected to head to Europe. Anything beyond that, I got zilch.

- If Knight was going to do anything to Vogel, now would be the time.
- Balladeer

- Little birdy here in Denver just told me that Vogel is set to have lunch with several CAS government types while he's there.
- Kay St. Irregular.

- Building on what Fianchetto said, one of my associates in Seattle arranged a meeting between Vogel and a shadowrunner named Rex Simmons. Isn't Simmons "former" Seraphim as well?
- Sounder

THE FIRE EXTINGUISHED?

After almost a month cooling my heels following the Bob debacle, I finally heard back from one of my Ares Mr. Johnsons. From there, the jobs continued, but each one got worse in terms of danger. Some were rough—took more than a few bullets to the body on a few of them—while others were in some truly god-forsaken places.

Then I heard from who I call my prime Mr. Johnson. I'm always professional with my Johnsons, but with this particular one, we've had a bit more of a friendly and informal relationship. But this time, things seemed a bit tenser. Nothing overt, but I know how to read someone. His words were a bit more precise, his delivery more formal, his smile smaller. For a moment, I was convinced that someone had me in their sights and was waiting for the order to pull a trigger.

But Mr. Johnson had bigger fish to fry, it seemed, and thankfully it wasn't me.

This time, the job was going to be a bit more involved and challenging than the last few I'd been given. The pitch was standard, the fee I expected substantial, and it also contained provisions for traveling and other expenses. That last part was a bit odd, as I usually take care of that myself. So why were they offering the use of an Ares private jet? Well, seems that they wanted this one mark taken care of sooner than later. Even though I was suspicious about the whole damn thing, I agreed if for no reason to try and determine if they were testing me.

Besides, if I wanted a crack at Hendricks, I needed to stay on Ares' good side.

The mark was one David Lim—sorry *Captain* David Lim. For those of you reading this, I'll save you the search and give you a quick history lesson. Back when he was a corporal, he was part of Anne Ravenheart's team that detonated the nuke in Chicago back in '55. He was also one of the few members of that Firewatch team to survive the hell that was the Containment Zone. After the CZ was lifted, he took two years off recuperating but eventually returned to Firewatch, eventually becoming one of their senior instructors. He's one of the few people who've forgotten more about bugs than most people will ever know, aside from Ravenheart.

I may be a cold-hearted bastard, but I recognize one of the genuine good guys when I see them. And now Ares wanted me to track down one of their own, one of their most decorated, so they could interrogate and then execute him. And no, I'm not being hyperbolic. When I asked the usual question of dead or alive, I was told alive, and the reasons for that were hinted at. But I could read between the lines.

- Okay, I know Sticks is a certifiable bastard, but is anyone else here noticing the hint of paranoia in this posting?
- Butch

And the kicker, their leads suggested he was heading towards Chicago. Yay.

I've been to Chicago more times that I want to admit, and I hate it every time. But a job is a job. And on this one I had to pull out all of the stops. Twice as much for info from contacts or locals, three times as much legwork. And don't get me started on the literal drek I had to haul myself through. Thankfully, an old chum from a few years back convinced me to learn some outdoor skills (RIP Mamba) and wear sensible shoes. If anyone wonders where I've been for the past couple of months, now you know.

I lost track of the kilometers I traveled on foot through the worst parts of Chicago; I even lost several kilos and centimeters off my waist. But I found Lim, or at least I found where he was going to be. So I hired some local muscle to help me watch the place and help with the capture. Although to be honest, I wasn't sure what I was going to do once—if—I caught him. So many questions in my mind, so many conflicting moments. All I knew is that we were going to have a talk, and I was going to try to get some real answers. The content of those answers would determine what I was going to do next—not only with Lim, but with myself.

Setup for the snare was textbook, something I've done literally hundreds of times before exactly like this. Neuro-stun grenades were ready, Stick-N-Shock in my SMG and Predator. Everything was in place. But something went wrong, I must have screwed up somehow because suddenly, my hired help went down and went down hard.

Next thing I know, someone in full mil-spec armor comes out of nowhere, suppressed assault rifle spewing hot lead in my general direction. I hit the deck and roll out of my hiding spot as rounds slam right were my chest was. Somehow, I got to my feet and scrambled around a crumbling wall, just quick enough to look down and see the tranq dart imbed in my chest.

- Not to sound rude but while this sounds like a great action trid, the amount of usable paydata is negligible. Glitch, can you speed this up?
- Rigger X

- If you can't pick out the important details that come up in an unfolding run, what are you doing in this job?
- Glitch

I woke up, thankfully, with a raging headache and very securely strapped to some chair. My gear, of course, was gone. A camping light sat on a table in the corner, shining directly in my eyes. I heard rather than saw the figures in the background. There were at least four with me in the large room, and they were arguing with each other.

My head was still extremely foggy, but I heard them say things like "How do we know he was the only one?" "They'll just send more," and (what stood out most in my mind), "They already got Miller, Jones, Cloud-Strider, and Shoho," and my personal favorite, "We should kill him now."

Instead, I heard a voice that I swear I'd heard *somewhere* before cut in and say with *fucking authority* "No. He's mercenary as they come, but we need at the very least to know what he knows. And I'm not sure what side he's really one.

And before anyone could object, there was an odd humming sound. My captors obviously knew what it was because they immediately went for what I'm pretty certain were weapons. Then, this massive form drops literally through the ceiling, the force of its landing knocking the lamp to the floor. I don't know if it was the residual knockout juice in my brain, but my rational mind registered it as something large, likely a troll, in full body armor.

Gunfire rang out, causing the troll to stagger, but it recovered and lunged forward, swinging a massive arm with what I guess was a sword or massive cyberspur, cleaving one of my hosts from shoulder to groin. Watching the battle in bits of flash and shadow, I saw my remaining hosts empty their magazines into this thing, for frag-all the good it did them. I've seen trolls take hits, but *damn*!

Then, I saw a magical energies form in the hands in one of my hosts, and I finally got a decent look at her. I may be wrong, but I'll say until my dying breath that it was Anne Ravenheart herself. She let loose with the spell, and the troll literally blew in half, the head landing at my feet as it fell out of its helmet.

Now, things get really fuzzy here, and I don't know why, but something in my brain just—well, it decided not to work anymore. I remember looking down at the head, expecting to see a troll's face. I did, but I also saw small mandibles instead of tusks, and a large composite eye.

I then vaguely remember things coming back into focus, looking into Ravenheart's face, my body unable to move. I felt rain on my face, so I guess they'd dragged me outside. She looked me in the eyes and said, "A war is about to begin. Decide what side you're on before someone does it for you."

After that, I blacked out again. Not much to tell after that. I woke up in a beat up Ford Americar just outside of the CZ, key in the ignition. That was two days ago. Reported in to Mr. Johnson. Not sure if that was a good idea; I left out the parts about the troll. He was disappointed, but said he understood, that it happens. Not sure what'll happen after this, but either way, I'm gonna find answers.

<End file>

- That's all we have. I'm still chasing down leads, but what I've uncovered is that the names Miller, Jones, Cloud-Strider, and Shoho are members of Firewatch listed as

KIA. Last known assignment was deep recon in Chicago. Several other Firewatch members have also been killed under mysterious circumstances.

- Glitch

"SPECIAL" ELECTION

POSTED BY: FOX

- This has only been up for an hour, and I already deleted a rash of posts touting me for Governor of Seattle. This is the warning to stop wasting our megapulses. I've inserted a bit of code as a mild reminder. I intentionally chose Fox because she's been keeping up on everything political in Seattle since Brackhaven first popped up on a ballot. Add in her social engineering expertise, and she's the perfect fit for this little look at the upcoming Special Election. She also agrees that I make a terrible politician.
- Bull

We are coming up on a historic time in Seattle. We are about to hold our first Special Election outside the normal election cycle, while at the same time we face questions on the very validity our existence. The Treaty of Denver is in shambles, we've lost a governor to scandal, and forces all around us are wondering if this trading hub could be better run by a more local authority. This election is going to have far more significant effects on the future of Seattle than the average SINner (and SINless) realizes.

Let's a take a look at how we got here and who we might be seeing at the helm in the near future. I'm also going to drop in a little info on what's going down and who's doing what, but I'll keep it light. A focus on the shadows, rather than the political drama.

WHAT'S SPECIAL?

Brackhaven finally got caught with his hand in the cookie jar. Well, he got caught poisoning the cookie jar, murdering the baker, and handing out poisoned

snickerdoodles to the underprivileged of the Ork Underground, but the shorter idiom works just fine. Some scandals finally stuck, and he's out of office. A little earlier than expected, and that's created more than a few problems. The details are quite exciting, but the screamsheets are a fine place to get them, since they finally got something right. That's what happens when the DA gets handed the ultimate informant, and she has a team of Special Investigators for the District Attorneys Office (read as shadowrunners) on hand to keep him (and her) secure.

That leaves an empty governor's mansion and a crazy collection of candidates the corporations of Seattle haven't had time to groom or get dirt on. The corps are left without a clear favorite and need to scramble for dirt, leverage, or a guy with a gun to clear away anyone who gets too close to the throne without their approval.

The short cycle has left very little time for building a campaign, both for and against candidates. They haven't had the normal year of Matrix spamming to get their name out there and bad-mouth the other guy into submission. Those same things are going on now, but this time around it's all happening so fast and so close together people don't really have time to build up a belief one way or the other. This means the candidates are free to get votes more on name recognition than actual political agendas and the issues of the city.

This lack of time also means that groups who have some crazy agenda items can get their name into enough ears to get selected, especially if they can make their crazy idea seem less crazy then the next guy's. This is the part where the political campaign managers and social-engineering specialists are coming in and giving their candidate just the right words to make their name click, but making sure they don't go off the rails with their rants. We've had a few fall off already.

This cut-down campaign is also pushing the shadows into overdrive to find, or make up, dirt on candidates. The snipped timeline means that a lot of the usual long cons that get candidates into compromising situations aren't available. That leaves two main options. One, dirty short cons that are usually so transparent even a politician can see their way past them; two, a need for highly skilled grifters who can run a long con in short time, or can build a con ground up without prep. All those dirty shorts are easily cleaned up by a good campaign manager and some connections (now called favors) to a good PR corp, like Charisma Associates or Image, Inc. The games are tougher, and that's why this election is special.

THE CANDIDATES

The governor's seat is temporarily in the hands of Natoko Munakata, Commissioner of Public Works. She's doing a solid job thus far but still hasn't officially thrown her hat into the candidate pool. I'm listing all eight official candidates by their last poll position. Things are shifting for most of them daily, but the top four and bottom four have stayed fairly steady throughout this rapid election cycle with the exception of the single candidate replacement I'll talk about later. Each candidate is listed with their party and current poll percentage. There really is no clear winner because at any point someone could drop out, throw their weight behind another candidate, and shuffle the whole list.

NIKOLA TAUL
DEMOCRAT (19.4%)

As the mayor of Downtown, Nikola is in the lead, primarily because she has the most well-known name among the candidates. The fact that she has the largest district in the metroplex as her home turf definitely doesn't hurt. Politically, she's got a good reputation. She keeps the public trust by spending city funds to make them feel safe and does a great job of painting anything that might seem frivolous as a public beautification project that's building jobs and volunteer opportunities for disenfranchised youth.

The corporations have never gotten her fully in their pocket, even while she ran the district where they all make a home. She has a natural charisma and a sharpness that has kept all the megacorps from steamrolling or getting their hooks into her. Without their backing, her campaign is going to need a lot more public support, because once the corps start pushing for a candidate, polls do a lot of swaying toward their pick. The only way to balance that is genuine citizen support.

When it comes to the issues, she plays them all moderately. She doesn't lean heavily one way or the other and promises an open mind on every issue brought her way. This seems like a great methodology, but it can be painted as indecisive and wishy-washy by even the greenest of PR specialists. As the campaign has progressed, she has been forced to take a firm stand on several issues that have solidified some voter blocs for her but also ostracized several others. The big ticket issue being tossed at her right now is the SINless and the new SIN registry.

The issue is particularly important because it would shift a massive number of voters into the hands of some outskirts candidates, Sonya Scholl in particular. Most SINless are tossed to the barrens, and both Puyallup and Redmond could easily double their voter count if universal registry goes through. While this won't change voter counts for this election, it definitely has the potential of shifting the tides in the future, meaning Taul needs to get into office now and hold the tide of SINless at bay.

We'll wrap with a little dirt. Everyone knows that Downtown is not as clean as it seems. Nikola stays out of people's pockets by playing them all against each other, but sometimes those games don't play out like she wants. The ugly truth is that Nikola had a hand in the five hundred sixty-four deaths at the ACHE in July, and she and her team are trying to keep her involvement cov-

ered up. While shifting money around to fund some of her pet projects, Nikola cut the maintenance budget for the ACHE's heating and cooling systems. The funds left would have been sufficient if it wasn't for that fact that July 9 through 15 were the hottest seven days in the history of Seattle. The scorching temperatures (yes, 37°C is scorching in Seattle) overloaded the AC systems across several floors of the ACHE. The heat compounded each day, and several residents recorded temperatures within their apartments in excess of 50°C. And those were the ones who could record and report the temperatures because the heat hadn't shorted out the electrical systems. While the act was not malicious and there is no way criminal charges would ever stick to Taul, her political career would be over if it gets tied back to her.

CORINNE POTTER
TECHNOCRATIC (17.2%)

This is the biggest shake-up that has happened thus far in this already short campaign cycle, and it did not turn out how most expected. Howard Cannon was the surprise Technocratic candidate who seemed like little more than a great smile and a well-groomed head to put in front of cameras. He was a senior VP with Charisma Associates, so he had a great PR and campaign team and some corporate support, but the team couldn't keep him from indulging in some of his less than savory habits. The right money in the right place left Cannon dead on a Snohomish street, which freed up the eight percent support he had been drawing at the time.

After his death, his campaign manager, Corinne Potter, made a heartfelt speech to the city and talked about Cannon in the way only a top-notch PR master could do. The result was nothing short of miraculous. His supporters were suddenly pushing for Potter to take his place on the ballot. She played coy and worked it a little more, and when it came to the first official poll after she joined the race, she was suddenly number two and on the rise with every demographic in the city.

Potter is a career campaigner. Her résumé has included work on successful campaigns all over the Pacific coast, throughout the NAN, and even as far east as Detroit. She's worked the commcalls, done Matrix polling, developed campaign outlines, written speeches, and re-shaped the political agendas of dozens of politicians to get them elected. She was born and raised in SoCal, went to Stanford for a degree in political science and an MBA, and then started working campaigns. She's thirty-one years old, and already she is one of the most sought-after campaign coordinators in North America.

And it's all a lie.

It all checks out digitally, but if you ask people involved in those campaigns if they remember Corrie, you get a lot of blank stares. Potter is the current identity of an operative for Horizon's Dawkins Group. She was originally put in place to get Cannon into the governor's mansion, but when someone decided Cannon was better off dead, she had a choice: cut and run and call the operation a failure, or push forward another candidate. I would never have even been suspicious if she had been successful in throwing Cannon's support behind Erik Shira, the UCAS Representative, but Shira ended up breaking down in tears after her speech and was a babbling mess when he stepped up. Potter saved him as well, and the rest is part of this brief history.

I can't prove any of this, but that's how corps work. They can twist and bury anything they need to in order to get the right person into place for a job, and Potter is poised to take the top seat in Seattle. It's still early, but you know more Horizon support is coming soon, and that will quickly be followed by Ares thanks to their buddy-buddy relationship. I can't decide whether I'm proud or terrified that a deep-cover con is on the verge of gaining political office. I sense a new con name coming soon.

- What?! Potter is Dawkins and no one realizes it? I can't imagine this making it all the way to election day before someone digs up some evidence and solid proof.
- Slamm-0!

- You're so cute, Slammy. Why do you think Fox is mentioning it? She's just planted the seeds to break the con. So nice to see a skilled social engineer in action. Well done, Fox.
- Fianchetto

CHARLES SEAVER
REPUBLICAN (15.1%)

As the UCAS senator from Seattle, Seaver was a known politician. Whether that's good or bad is always a question of opinion. From the view of most people, he's the name they've seen on their virtual ballot since the early '60s. For those in the know, he's been a reliable voice for the megacorporate agenda in the UCAS Senate, which puts him on the side of the corps, but with no direct support because he's never made any big plays for them. Many saw him as a cardboard cutout politician with a serious lack of personality who didn't have the swagger and charisma of a good, high-profile governor. His new campaign team has changed all that. He's being seen as a renaissance man who can bring a bright future to Seattle.

Others have reported that local Draco Foundation personnel strongly oppose his campaign. They haven't revealed why, but they have been working to break up support for Seaver's election. No one inside the DF is giving reasons, and that gave me a reason to start looking and poking around.

Sometimes you find things you don't want to believe.

In June, a young woman contacted Knight Errant in a panic. She was entertaining a gentleman when he simply collapsed. Knight Errant was contacted by DocWagon en route to the location to inform them that they had a client

on site showing minimal to no vitals. When both arrived on scene, they found Charles Seaver unresponsive. The young lady explained that the pair were engaging in intercourse when Seaver collapsed.

Records indicate that Seaver was rushed to Harborview Medical Center and required the use of a resuscitation service en route. He was kept overnight for observation but given a clean bill of health and sent on his way the following morning.

The DocWagon crew and the young lady, tell some very different stories. According to the young lady, Seaver collapsed and was not breathing for several minutes before she realized her only choice was to contact Knight Errant. The DocWagon team claim that when they arrived on site, they were there to act as coroners and found Seaver dead from the suspension of his heart function.

While on the way to Harborview, Seaver spontaneously resuscitated. The DocWagon crew simply claimed the services were performed by them when they arrived and dumped him off as quickly as possible.

While I am not the most well-versed in many of the darker aspects of the shadows, I am well aware of the existence of shedim, as I spent the evening they first rose living in terror next door to a New Orleans cemetery. This sudden change in personality and the Draco Foundation's disapproval of Seaver both support my hypothesis, but they are circumstantial at best

- It would explain the bullets he took in August as well. A team of runners was contracted to terminate his campaign. The senator took nearly a dozen assault rifle rounds to the chest and lived to tell the tale. Body armor can explain a lot, but the team that made the hit got him while he was sunning by his pool. It was a bloody mess, but he was back on the trid the next day talking about a failed attempt on his life and the strife that assassinations and political violence put on the election process.
- Picador

KATHERINE CHOI ARCHCONSERVATIVE (13.4%)

After the scandals that plagued Brackhaven, having a straight-shooting fed in charge is looking like a good change to a lot of Seattleites. As the head of the Seattle FBI office, Choi's got the law-and-order campaign locked down, and high-profile District Attorney Dana Oaks is Choi's favorite photo buddy. Choi's elven heritage has gotten her support from the metahuman population of Seattle, but it pretty much guarantees she's not going to get a lick of Brackhaven's former supporter base.

Her no-nonsense attitude and true belief in the black and white of the law has some voters nervous and some potential corporate supporters unsure if she's the horse to back. As an elf, she's been approached by Telestrian as their candidate of choice, but a AA backer isn't nearly as good as a AAA. The only one of those that has given her the time of day is NeoNET, and right now, that's worth even less than an AA.

- Actually, NeoNET's support is huge. They're going down, but many of their pieces need a soft place to land. Having Seattle looking favorably on former NeoNET divisions would be quite helpful in the near future.
- Icarus

Choi is a tough nut to crack. She looks clean as a whistle and she's sharp. In order to break her power base, someone needs to create a scandal parallel to her with connections to those close to her. She's too sharp for most grifters, and those who might be able to play her don't have the lead time to do the job right. That means the dirt will need to stick to someone close to her. After that, the mark can be used to pressure Choi's decisions. Choi is smart enough to know that's the play that can be made against her, and she's put some extra surveillance and security on her closest people. She can't afford to cover them all, though, at least not all of the time. Working against her is going to require patience.

JOSEPHINE DZUGHASHVILI INDEPENDENCE (11.6%)

With her "health concerns" all cleared up, Dzughashvili is ready to take another crack at the big chair. Just to be clear, those health concerns were not immediate in nature, and they primarily were a concern for her health if she were to continue running against Brackhaven. She's upped her private security and secured her vulnerabilities behind private contractors for the election cycle. That's not to say enterprising runners or a skilled assassin wouldn't be able to get to her or her people, but it wouldn't be easy or quiet.

She's still running on the same "Seattle for Seattleites" platform with a serious "independent Seattle" undertone. I don't think she has the clout and connection to pull off that move, but it's getting her votes. And that's all that really matters right now. She and Sonya Scholl have very similar rhetoric, and if the two can combine voters, one of them will move way up in the polls. The problem for Dzughashvili is that Scholl's supporters are staunchly for her and will flake out on voting for anyone that isn't Scholl. Dzughashvili may have to take a back seat to Scholl if they want their agenda in office. It's a long shot, but there are a lot of plays that can be made getting those two aligned.

Dzughashvili owes a lot of favors to politicians and corporate supporters near and far. Her previous bid for governor was not free of strings being pulled for her, she just had a bigger threat of her strings being cut looming over her head in the end. She hasn't had many chances to pay off those old debts, so they're compounding with her new ones from this run.

- Strange as it sounds, Dzughashvili has approached several street gangs—via intermediaries, obviously—to act as security for her rallies. The gangs have been doing a great job of making their presence known, which helps keep order. If they get too rowdy, Dzughashvili has codewords and pass phrases that the gang's leaders know means cut and run. Dzughashvili looks like a powerful force of law, and the gangs get paid.
- Bull

- Her last rally had some trouble. Someone else contracted a rival gang to show up. Dzughashvili doesn't pay enough for a gang to lose face against a rival, and instead she lost face because all her supporters left and the gangs hung out for a staredown until the jackboots showed up.
- Sounder

ALONSO SOLIS
NEW CENTURY PARTY (10.3%)

With real corp credentials, Solis is the best candidate for the corporations. He worked his way up the ranks of Microdeck's engineering department while gaining some political experience on several special commissions formed by Bellevue's Mayor Daniel Reynolds. He's got an interesting mix of tech and magic as an adept in one of the world's top tech corps, but this isn't playing to his favor like he was expecting. He has the New Century Party support thanks to his arcane talents, but his mixed bag of talents is leading to a lot more suspicion than support. He has all the right backers; he just needs to get a good campaign line for everyone to recite.

Politically he could end up as a corporate pawn, a stooge front man for the magocracy, or as a genuine person that just happens to have some arcane talent but enjoyed technology too much to give it up. He's charismatic for sure, and he has a moderate enough political agenda that any of the other candidates could throw their support behind him if they feel their chances are too small.

But that's not the good stuff. Solis is a puppet for Reynolds. If he wins, Bellevue will be running the metroplex. From what I've gathered, Reynolds has some kind of really juicy dirt on Solis. Thing is, Solis is a straight shooter. Nothing I've seen or heard says otherwise. Whatever this dirt is, it must have been one of those "this one time in college" moments, but something so bad it keeps Solis under Reynolds' thumb.

- It's not dirt on Solis, at least not Alonso. Charity Solis, Alonso's baby sister, also possesses the Talent. Problem is, she grew up hanging out with an Azzie street gang. They had some gang rituals that played off the old Aztec traditions, sacrifices and such, and while they weren't a wizzer gang, Solis found her magic easier and more potent when connected to the gang's bloody style. She may not be a traditionally trained blood mage, but a bounty is a bounty. Her aura shows blood magic, so she's a blood mage.
- Clockwork

- I heard it was his wife (though not the blood mage part). His wife has a rare genetic condition being kept in check through Reynolds' connections with NeoNET and Nightingale.
- Butch

SONYA SCHOLL
INDEPENDENT (9.5%)

It is only because this is a rapid campaign election, with no time to show off how crazy some of the candidates are, that Sonya has been able to gather such a considerable chunk of the polls. People recognize her name because she's been the mayor of Redmond for over ten years now, and that's definitely a worthy accomplishment. Her name recognition and fame is getting her poll votes, but most political pundits still think she hasn't a chance in hell. Still, this is the kind of election where anything can happen. She has at least made one conformist change and shifted her political party affiliation from Socialist to Independent. While the Socialist moniker doesn't mean much in Redmond, across the metroplex it may leave a bad impression with a large number of potential voters.

She's not going to get support from the corps, because she's never said a kind word about them. She has said on numerous occasions that the megacorporations are the "rapists of Redmond," hiding their most dangerous labs and projects in her district without ever paying a dime in support because they hide the project ownership behind scads of front companies. Her rant about the "demon dogs" incident last year, where she blamed Ares for the intentional release of a pack of genetically modified dogs near Glow City, is still getting downloads. She's not wrong about how the megas operate in Redmond, but I think she forgets just how much cash flows into her district from the megacorps via the shadows. The SINless population is huge, and they still spend money. And a lot of runners who live off their fake SINs have addresses in Redmond and pay taxes there.

- Ares is also still getting inquiries about that "demon dog" project. There's no such thing as bad publicity.
- Balladeer

- You know you're talking about the company behind the Excalibur, right?
- Cosmo

No matter what anyone else says or does, Redmond will vote Scholl. They love her. If she drops out, Redmond just won't bother voting because they know whoever gets in as governor is going to just continue to

sweep all the garbage over to them or Puyallup. Opponents of Scholl are sowing seeds of discord within her district about losing their great mayor to the metroplex. It's a smart play for anyone concerned about putting the mayor of crazytown in charge of the whole metroplex. Which should be everyone.

- Scholl is the best candidate to hold the seat for a few transitions years. She'll get the metroplex a lot of publicity but won't be able to do anything politically because she has no connections.
- Plan 9

VANEESH IBN KALANYR INDEPENDENT (3.5%)

When Scholl stepped into the ring, Seattle thought it had its wackiest candidate. Then this guy came along. He's an unknown, but he's snagged a chunk of the polls by having a flashy backer, the dragon Kalanyr. A year ago, Vaneesh was an overqualified security grunt working courier runs for Wolverine in Redmond, Glow City in particular. Somehow he ended up running across Kalanyr, one of the two dragons in town. The kid was a lost soul, and the dragon decided he had a greater calling. Vaneesh made an official name change, becoming the son of Kalanyr, and joined the gubernatorial race. He's been drawing supporters by having a dragon as his benefactor and talking about big changes for Seattle in the vaguest possible terms. His rallies draw hordes of dragon worshipers who hope to get a glimpse of Kalanyr but aren't in much of a position to change the political race in Seattle.

The thing is, he has enough poll draw that some of the others hope to get his supporters once he drops out. This race is so close that his small percentage could be the difference as the election draws closer to a final run.

- Security grunt? Vaneesh was a runner. I'm not sure where he got the clean SIN, but I'm sure there's more to the story than just a random run-in with Kalanyr. There's more playing out here than they're saying. And when there's a runner playing politician for a dragon, there's runs to be had to figure out what's going on. Or play a part in whatever craziness is happening.
- Sounder

THE CONS

With this many candidates and the short campaign run, there are plenty of jobs in the works. The nature of politics and the security the candidates build around themselves means most of the jobs require extensive social engineering—con jobs, to those on the streets. I know of several already in the works, and the list of possible setups, even with this short window, is extensive. Without giving away too many details of what they're up to, I'd like to clue everyone in to some current operations active in Seattle and maybe guide you toward some of your own.

BLOOD MONEY

The list of those who know about Solis' sister is not short. While I've talked about this being used to control Solis, there is also a player using it to push his sister, Charity, to play nice while her brother runs. The problem is her compatriots aren't keen on anyone using her, them, or even her brother for anything. At least not without them getting a cut of the action. As it stands, Reynolds is pushing Solis with his sister, a separate player is pushing Charity to stay frosty, and the leader of her gang, Azure, is pushing back against all of them. Getting involved allows for a lot of angles for a skilled operator to approach from, just be sure to check on the other pros who might be working the same marks.

GUARDIAN ANGEL

Taul's bad week with the ACHE isn't just a good way for corps to blackmail her. It is currently the pressure being used by an individual known as ACHEIAN to get Taul to use some of her campaign funds for the delivery of extra food to citizens of the ACHE. For now, it's working, but if Taul makes it into office the leverage might not outweigh the power Taul has to silence the truth. I know ACHEIAN, and if there's a chance that Taul will force the cover up or cleanup once in office, ACHEIAN will go public before that. I suspect some runners in Seattle are going to get a chance to do a little good for the ACHE. Or at least keep a local Robin Hood from getting killed.

BACK CHOI

I like the devilish nature of this job. Because Choi is so clean, sometimes dirt needs to be created. An out-of-town grifter team is running this one. They're from DeeCee, and my sources say it's a bit more personal than professional. Not my favorite way of doing business, but it's working. In order to make Choi look corrupt, funds being donated to her campaign are leaving a digital trail that connects to businesses and laundering operations belonging to the Finnigan family, Shigeda gumi, and four top Seattle fixers. The trails are thin, and the information would never get her convicted of anything, but during the election she just needs to be convicted in the court of public opinion. And that's a lot easier. The job is almost ready for the big reveal, but there's going to be some backlash early on, so the team leader running the show is recruiting some back up.

DEEP HORIZON

As mentioned earlier, Corrinne Potter is a deep-cover operative for the Dawkins Group. Just saying that means nothing, because I read material on the Matrix last week that said she was the reborn spirit of Dunkelzahn. Evidence is the key. That's where several past acquaintances, all former Horizon employees who've now

found themselves members of the Seattle shadows, come in. They've got evidence, and they're looking to push Potter's buttons. Either they want to have some insider control or they're going to blow her cover before she makes the election. Potter is not a typical politician, and blackmailing her is going to result in some shadowy backlash. Horizon, specifically Dawkins, is already running the counter-intel on this and pulling together shadow assets to keep Potter looking like an exciting, positive option for voters.

SHELL GAME

It's going to need to be a complex string of jobs all run parallel, but Scholl's support can be a play to get some leverage from every candidate. She has a large enough percentage that other candidates are going to want her support. Normally, that wouldn't be something anyone other than Sonya would be able to negotiate, but Scholl has a lot of people who talk for her. It's part of her crazy charm. That could also be the reason no one has tried to work this one yet. It takes a lot of work to coordinate around her kind of crazy.

DEAD DROP

If Seaver is a shedim, there's a lot more to do against him than reveal that fact before the election. And even if this info is true and released while in office, Seaver will be out of office fast, so timing isn't the issue. The problem for most grifters coming into this is how, I think, shedim operate. From my little understanding, one of the ways that shedim manage to keep their secret is by slowly integrating more of their kind into their close circle. Grifters can't get truly close without risking being taken over. This job is going to require extensive periphery work without seeming like the eager beaver. I'm not sure it could get done before the election, but if it doesn't, and Seaver wins, it will need to be completed while he's in office to get him out. I can't imagine what agenda a shedim would push while acting as governor, but there's no way it would be good.

- A smart grifter would approach a benefactor before going after Seaver. The DF hires a lot of runners and would have zero issues getting behind a team looking to take down a shedim in public office.
- Frosty

STREET-LEVEL PLAYERS

This election isn't just playing out in the political arena. This kind of crazy flows down into the streets and touches every level of life in Seattle, especially the criminal part. Just like the corps, the criminals haven't had time to get a grip on the candidates. This means a lot going on and most of the organizations are playing it their own way and focused on only one or two candidates due to the narrow window of opportunity.

The Finnigan family is looking at Taul and Seaver as the best candidates to get behind. They just need some dirt or a situation where one, or both, of them needs help that only they can provide. These are situations built for runners. From everything I've seen, they aren't aware of Seaver's potential nature, which could be a big problem for an uninformed team. As for Taul, she's ideal to get dirty with the mob. I'm surprised that she wasn't already into them. She has photographs with most of the upper-echelon of the family from various fundraisers and high-profile social events, including Dona O'Malley herself.

The Yakuza is in a place with no obvious options for support. While many think this puts them on the outside looking in at this political debacle, it instead gives them an excellent position from which to play the political game. No one is expecting their support, no one is asking for their support, and yet everyone could benefit from their help, especially with their connection to the largest megacorporation in the world and a huge population of Japanese-Americans that call Seattle home. This support is being offered quietly around to every candidate but being promised to none until one week before the election. The Yakuza are going to hold their control and look for the best candidates to get their claws into when they come begging right before that one-week deadline because they need the vote boost. I also know for a fact that the Yakuza are telling those who they control to make no vote claims in the polls so that their support value is a mystery.

The Vory are in much the same position as the Yakuza, but not because they have too many selective prejudices. Instead, the issue is that the only person who matches their level of crazy doesn't have a real shot. That isn't stopping them from throwing some support toward Scholl, it just means they aren't expecting a whole lot in return. Redmond is the perfect amount of crazy for the Vory. They already have a ton of activities there, but having a friend in the mayor, or even the governor, would be a boon worth a little political support.

The Seoulpa Rings are putting their support behind Choi. It looks like an odd move for a criminal organization, but it's a smart one for the little fish. If Choi got into office, he'd go after the big fish—the Mafia and the Yakuza—leaving a lot of voids for the Seoulpa Rings to fill. The money they are slipping into the campaign is relatively small, but they're earning support by helping the campaign out on the street. Hwan Kyung is orchestrating a small group that is preventing crimes in the name of Choi. Even the most loyal among the Komun'go have a hard time taking orders to enforce laws rather than break them, so Kyung uses quite a few shadowrunners.

The Triads aren't supporting any of the candidates. They are instead putting their effort into profiting off the chaos being generated by the campaign. The various Triad groups are shifting a lot of effort into fixing jobs. This puts them in a great place to gather insider info and

know better than the polls who is in the lead based on what shadow work is coming to fruition down the road. The strange part is that all the Triad gangs in Seattle are following suit. The great dragon Lung must have a reason for this coordination.

Elections aren't normally a place for the street gangs of Seattle to get involved, but this election cycle is strange on every level, including major participation by the gangs of Seattle. Across the city, the gangs of Seattle are getting used on every level. On the streets, some are inciting terror where terror is needed, while others are playing the part of fearful lawbreakers fleeing from the law. All over, they are making money as the candidates use this easy resource to play con games with the populace and shift votes around.

At least one of the Metroplex's resident dragons is openly involved in this election. Kalanyr has slipped out of the shadows of Glow City and gotten in front of the camera for one of the candidates. The most outrageous of them, no doubt, but that outrageousness is still pulling votes from someone else. Figuring out who and why is the key to seeing whatever Kalanyr is playing at. Most pundits suspect those votes would go to Scholl, but going from 9.5 percent to 13 percent isn't going to sway the entire election. That is, unless, those 13 percent are also then part of a coalition between Scholl and Dzughashvili. If Vaneesh, Josephine, and Sonya all team up, they've got Taul—and everyone else—beat. It's a bit obvious, but Kalanyr isn't exactly the subtlest of the dragons.

- Scholl already has support from Urubia. While the Crimson Queen can't vote (she's a Salish-Shidhe citizen), the streets of Redmond are abuzz with her support of the local mayor as a way to slide up the political ladder. After that, Urubia would shift another of her followers into the mayor's spot, or possibly try to take it herself.
- Turbo Bunny

- During the Prop 23 wildness, there was a SIN registry event that ran in Redmond and Puyallup to try to get more votes for the new district. The census results haven't quite shifted yet, but the number of additional SINners now living in the Barrens is significant—like six-digit significant. That's a big chunk of voters who are hiding out in the Barrens and being controlled by ghost only knows what.
- Glitch

Brackhaven had a lot of support from the Humanis Policlub. Though I'm as mundane a human as they come, even I know that those guys are little more than a racist hate club that masquerades as a political support group. With Brackhaven gone, they need to throw their support to someone else, and their choices are quite limited in this election. In fact, only Charles Seaver fits the bill of mundane male human. While not completely misogynistic, they aren't going to throw their support behind Brackhaven's biggest former rival or the new woman they know nothing about. The thing is, they, like all political organizations, feel they deserve some form of reward for their support of a candidate. On top of that, they usually want to have some kind of dirt on the candidate so that they can hold them to their campaign (donation) promises.

So in comes their smaller, but far meaner brother, the Human Nation. The HN had some troubles in other North American cities recently, and they were/are in need of somewhere to regroup that is favorable to their cause, or at least willing to look the other way while they commit a little bit of their flavor of violence. They've inherited the resources they already had under Brackhaven, brought in some more that were fleeing Denver, and consolidated up in "Smoothsville,"a.k.a. Snohomish. From there they are going to be the force behind whatever threat or dirt the Humanis Policlub manages to put together to push Seaver.

CORPORATE PLAYERS

The megacorps in Seattle are trying to play catch-up. Most know that they aren't going to get a true corporate lackey (some are still reeling from the shock of this), so they're going for the next best thing, making sure that the candidates aren't in the pocket of their rivals. Efforts among the corps aren't equal, with some pushing the issues harder than others. Most of that pushing is going through the shadows, as players on both sides are using runners to keep an extra level of anonymity.

The polite dealings that are the current mode of interactions for the Japanacorps are making for a lot of speculation about who they support for governor. This bloc controls a huge segment of the population, and while the majority of their citizens cannot vote, those who they are connected to outside the megacorp can. This is a big chunk of support to throw around, and a desperate politician could make a very lucrative deal with this bloc. Once they have a pawn in place, I expect Seattle will be doing a cultural shift back to the early '50s, when the Japanacorps last worked together closely.

- The ACHE could very well return to being the Renraku Arcology if the new governor is under the Japanacorps' thumbs. Renraku is already back inside with management and logistics contracts. Expect something like this to become a hundred times more likely if Scholl or Dzughashvili get in, because they don't care what the UCAS has to say about giving the ACHE back to its original owners.
- Sounder

- That's assuming the ACHE doesn't get itself freed from Downtown. After Prop 23 gave the Seattle

Underground independence as a district, the ACHE thinks it's their turn. They've been reaching out to Scholl and Dzughashvili. Those two are the most likely to support breaking the ACHE away from Downtown and making it a separate district.

- Bull

- More and more, Scholl and Dzughashvili seem like they have a lot of support plays they can make that will get one of them elected. I'm all for shaking up the political arena, but this would be like a 9.9 on the Richter scale of political earthquakes.
- Slamm-0!

Thanks to the Potter connection, Horizon has a player in the game. Combine that with their possible link with the PCC, and we can all see they are going to need to play a delicate balancing act. The PCC has the strongest non-NAN connections of all the NAN members, and their progressive reputation could be a good thing for a Seattle looking for nearby friends without getting too cozy with the neighbor that completely envelops them. Problem is, any connection to the NAN is a vote-killer for many die-hard UCASians. Horizon is helping out Potter with a lot of promos from LA, making affiliation with the PCC look like the best thing for an isolated city.

The most notable absences in the political arena this go-round are Ares and NeoNET. While they are UCASian corporations, they are both taking hits from all sides (including inside), and they're so focused on their own respective problems, the corporations as a whole are not near as involved with the gubernatorial election as they have been in the past. That doesn't mean they aren't involved at all, but the jobs and efforts coming out of Ares and NeoNET are both very sporadic and disconnected. Individual executives are working to better their positions while the big bosses aren't looking. The work is risky, but risky is often what makes the best payoffs. Add on the fact that without the support of the big bosses, runners are less likely to get a Knight Errant or Minuteman double-cross when the job is done. Ares jobs involve a lot of candidate relations, both good and bad, to get some influence once the final votes are cast. NeoNET movers are looking for a place to land in the private sector once their house crumbles.

Last to be mentioned but nearly as influential as the Japanacorps, Aztechnology is offering PR services to any candidate who wants the help for extremely low rates. We all know this is just to get into the campaign and obtain some control over the candidates, but it's working, and it has them manipulating the election from the inside with Taul, Seaver, Choi, Solis, Dzughashvili, and ibn Kalanyr all getting PR and campaign advice from Aztechnology. The timing was too short for the Azzies to completely control the campaigns and orchestrate the selection of the next governor, but they can certainly sway some votes between the candidates by making the right suggestions.

- The dragon pawn isn't taking any Aztechnology advice. He's listening and playing along, probably in hopes of getting insider info on the rest, but even with a dragon behind him, he's not going to outwit Aztechnology. They know he's not totally on board, and they'll play that to their advantage.
- Plan 10

OTHER LOCAL INTERESTS

We can't forget about all the local players that are going to get themselves involved with the new governor. They want someone they can work with, and many of these candidates don't fit the bill. The political leaders of all the districts are trying to line up behind the candidate that best reflects their views (usually by political party), but it's not working out as well as one would expect. Because many of the candidates didn't work their way up the ranks of the political party, the old-timers aren't happy about who's being put up for the governorship. Since someone is going to win from among these candidates, the current rank-and-file politicians aren't trying to keep them out of office; rather, they're trying to get as much dirt as possible so they can push them around once they move into the mansion.

- Not altogether true. Politicians from Redmond, Puyallup, and the new Seattle Underground are all working toward the same goal. It's strange, but you can almost tell they know they have this one shot at the top Seattle seat, and they're actually working together.
- Bull

The politics and policies of Seattle always effect the NAN. Whether it's the Salish-Shidhe all around or the Sioux way beyond the mountains, events in Seattle reverberate through every nation. They were formed under the same treaty and have thus been tied together ever since. The fact that the Treaty of Denver is no longer valid means the same instability that might rumble through a politically unstable Seattle could echo in the NAN. They want a stable leader. Most of them seem to be on the same page in their selection, with some inter-tribal squabbles arising from recent changes. That said, they must know something the rest of us don't, because everything they seem to be doing is supporting Scholl. The PCC is throwing their support to Potter, but all of the shadow efforts are pushing for Redmond's Scholl to take over. Redmond has always had strong ties, both positive and negative, with the Salish-Shidhe. They share a rather long chunk of border that has meant a lot of meetings between Scholl and members of the Sovereign Tribal Council. Meeting don't always go well, but a mutual respect has been developed among the partici-

pants. It isn't just in the shadows, either. Scholl gets several positive news clips flashing through the Matrix each day that come from something a member of the STC or other NAN official says about the Seattle elections.

- It's a ploy to destabilize Seattle. If Mayor Nutbag gets upvoted to Governor Nutbag, Seattle will start to crumble from the inside, and the NAN will be happy to take back these sacred lands.
- Glitch

I'll wrap this with a touch on how politics in Seattle are being influenced by Tír politics. Seattle is the only reason Portland isn't the biggest shipping hub on the West Coast. They may have lost a lot of business when they went all "recluse nation," but Portland was never completely off-limits to outsiders. Now, if enough of a case can be made based on an economic increase, the Tír government would happily open up Portland to take over business currently going all the way to Seattle. A great way to get that would be for Seattle to become a chaotic mess under the leadership of a governor who really has no interest in seeing the city succeed. Operatives from the elven nation have been operating in Seattle and pushing support for two different candidates. Dzughashvili gives a lot of separatist undertones, and if Seattle were independent it would drastically change the rules for shipping, remove a well-known entity from control, and create an opportunity for Portland to snag some new contracts. She's an obvious destabilizing force, though she isn't likely to win. In the other corner is Seaver. My guess is the elves are more certain than I am about his true nature. Whether his agenda is all about helping his kind, and therefore not Seattle, or if he gets exposed for what he is, Seattle will get a black eye, and work will head south to Portland.

I hate ending on such a gloomy note, but hey, this is politics. If it's not doom and gloom, it's gloom and doom instead.

SPINRAD'S PERFECT STORM

POSTED BY: 2XL

- Okay chummers, pay attention. There's heavy drek going on with a few prominent AA corps. Since 2XL has operations throughout the Middle East and knows almost everything about Lisbon, where Spinrad has his HQ, I asked him to do some digging.This is too big for any of us to ignore, so take it away, omae.
- Bull

We've all heard rumors for years that Johnny Spinrad's been meeting secretly with Richard Villiers from NeoNET. This suggested that Spinrad is angling for the Corporate Court through the use of that golden ticket that Villiers can provide through JRJ. Well, it looks like Johnny Spinrad may have switched gears.

Spinrad has spent the last six months almost exclusively in the Middle East (while Villiers has been in hiding), evenly splitting his time between Istanbul, Riyadh, Medina, and Dubai. He showed up just three months before the Caliph died and has been a constant fixture at the side of the new Caliph, Ibrahim Kamel.

It might not seem all that odd for the head of a major corp to be making rounds in a new market. Spinrad has not traditionally spent much time in the Middle East, but that alone is nothing notable. The notable—no, fragging nuts—part is that Spinrad's been attending religious services ... religiously. For months, we have heard none of the boisterous, self-aggrandizing language that Johnny normally hands out like candy at press conferences, photo-ops, and product announcements. Rather, he's been seen spending all of his free time with Gabrielle Al Thani, oldest daughter of Emir Jassim bin Joaan Al Thani of Qatar. This time together is supervised, public, and well documented ... and that's what's odd. Johnny Spinrad never does anything by accident. Everything is calculated. I

GLOBAL SANDSTORM (GS)

Corporate Slogan: "Land, People, Life"
Corporate Status: AA, Private Corporation
World Headquarters: Riyadh, Arabian Caliphate
CEO: Aziz Ibn Yusuf Shammar

MAJOR SUBSIDIARIES

Construction: AgoraTech, Euphrates Solutions, Sandstorm Engineering Conglomerate, Mohit Development, Tiamat, Inc.

Energy/Resources: Arabian Future Industries, Global Oil, Hassayn PetroChem

Finance: Ifrit Services, Xenel-Oman

Heavy Industry: Montclair Industries, UCAS Steel

Magical Services: Djinn Licit Magic, Magnus Alchemical Science, Qur'anic Telesma

Security Services: Integrated Dynamics, Marduk Munitions, Sphinx Security

Miscellaneous: Aksakal Teks, Al-Jazeera News, RealSilk, Teva Pharmaceuticals.

have an idea as to what he's playing at, but I'll lay it out the relevant info for you, and you can be the judge.

So as a favor to Bull, here is the overview of the relevant parties and, if this goes the way I think it will, some of the biggest news of the last few years.

First, here is what I got on Global Sandstorm, the importance of which will be relevant soon.

Global Sandstorm emerged as an AA corporation in 2064, from a merger of Global Oil and the Sandstorm Engineering Conglomerate. Before the merger, Global Oil had lots of global assets, including UCAS Steel, but it remained a relatively small power. Sandstorm, on the other hand, while not having many assets beyond the Middle East, was incredibly powerful in the Arabic sphere. Their merger was in response to European AAA corporation Saeder-Krupp, in order to resist the growing foothold SK had gained in Arabia. Fortunately for Global Sandstorm, they also had friends in high places.

Aziz Ibn Yusuf al-Shammar, head of Global Sandstorm, was one of the biggest supporters of Ibn Eisa, leader of the New Islamic Jihad. When Ibn Eisa came to power, the Shammar family rose right along with him. When Matrix Crash 2.0 happened, Ibn Eisa blamed the Caliph, while Global Sandstorm was there to buy up myriad Arabian corporations devastated in the wake of the worldwide Matrix shutdown. Not long after the crash, however, al-Shammar showed his true colors.

Al-Shammar reached out to Caliph Ibn Saud, making him an offer. In exchange for full control Arabian corporate affairs, al-Shammar used his influence and knowledge of Ibn Eisa's network to help the Caliphate shut down the New Islamic Jihad.

Since then, Global Sandstorm has all but controlled the Arabian Caliphate's corporate landscape. Their only real competition in the Middle East is Saeder-Krupp. Even so, Global beats S-K in almost every market where they compete. This fact galls Lofwyr, Saeder-Krupp's draconic CEO, to no end, and his enmity for Global Sandstorm is becoming legendary.

Global Sandstorm's power has grown even further since it signed a deal in '68 with the leaders of Nigeria and Lagos to control the oil in the Niger Delta. As the Caliphate expands, like the recent entry into Syria and Iraq, Global Sandstorm's influence increases as well. Recent purchases in non-caliphate countries bolster their presence, such as Global's relatively recent acquisition of Aksakal Teks. Outside of the Arabian Caliphate, however, they are marginalized by the AAAs in other markets, which makes the movers and shakers in GS feel vulnerable. Vulnerable is a feeling that Global's executives, particularly Aziz Ibn Yusuf al-Shammar, find unacceptable.

This marginalization led GS to look for allies against the AAAs. Just last year, there were talks between Global Sandstorm, Proteus AG, the Frankfurt Bank Association, and AG Chemie to merge. This would have created an AA larger than four or five of the AAA corps. The untimely death of Caliph Ibn Saud however, and the ensuing uncertainty in the Arabian Caliphate put those plans on hold, at least from Global's side.

HERE ARE A FEW PEOPLE TO LOOK OUT FOR WHEN DEALING WITH GLOBAL SANDSTORM

Aziz Ibn Yusuf Shammar is CEO of Global Sandstorm. Not only that, but he is head of the Caliphate's most powerful family, the Shammar family, controls the Islamic-Corporate Cooperation Board (ICCB), and is the Emir of the Caliphate's Arabian Heartland emirate. In other words, he might be the most powerful person in the Arabian Caliphate, including the Caliph himself.

- This is no joke. Shammar is a force of nature in the Caliphate. And he didn't get there by being altruistic. He is a cruel, manipulative, and violent man. His nicknames include the Arabian Shogun and the Muslim Borgia.
- Goat Foot

- Shammar is ruthless. Like Darth Vader ruthless. He supported Ibn Eisa, then stabbed him in the back and handed him over to the Caliph as soon as he got what he wanted. Rumors are that he was even responsible for the Middle Eastern corps getting hit so hard during Crash 2.0 while Global Sandstorm barely got touched. He has hired runners to infiltrate religious schools, assassinated political and corporate rivals—and he deals with dragons. Last I heard, Aufheben was trying to take out Shammar and a few other Middle Eastern leaders. What happened, Auf?
- Am-Mut

- Aufheben? You here?
- Picador

- Come to think of it, has anyone heard from Aufheben in a while? I know he left Bogota and headed to Dubai around the time of the explosion at the Burj Khalifa.
- Goat Foot

- This may sound crazy, but six months ago, I was reading the tarot and drew the Hanged Man, alongside Discipline and the Three of Batons. The really bizarre part was seeing Aufheben's face on the Hanged Man card. I thought I was having a vision, but I wasn't. 2XL informed me that Aufheben's star had gone out the next day. I've had a lot of visions, but never like that before. There is something strange happening with the Arcana. I can sense it.
- Arete

- Do you still have the card?
- Picador

- No. It was ... extracted.
- Arete

Emir Sulaiman Hamad Al Futtaim leads the United Emirates within the Caliphate. He is a major shareholder within Global Sandstorm in addition to ruling his own emirate. He usually goes along with everything Shammar says, except he broke that tradition for the first time in the recent vote for Caliph. Shammar leaned hard on the Emirates to elect another Saud to follow Ibn Saud, but the vote went the other way, with Al Futtaim being the swing vote. Can't say why he made it, but he must have a reason for crossing Shammar.

- I know the reason. Al Futtaim has set his sights high. Really high. Orbital, even.
- Rigger X

There are other powerful people within Global Sandstorm who don't happen to be Emirs within the Caliphate. The **al-Sheikh** and **Sudayrin** families own a great deal of Global Sandstorm's assets, particularly Arabian Futures, Ifrit Services, and Xenel-Oman. Head of the al-Sheik family, **Lucas al-Sheikh**, handles energy and resource management in Riyadh, while **Mohammad Sudayrin** oversees most of Global's financing assets. One more name: **Shaheed Zahir**. I've heard Zahir's name whispered here and there, but I can't find any information on him. None. But my sources tell me that he's been at every single board meeting that Global Sandstorm has ever had. I've also heard he gets whatever he wants from al-Shammar. So whoever he is, he must have something on the CEO.

- That's because he isn't a he. He is a she and she is a dragon. Fact.
- Plan 9

- Oh geez. Here we go again. Zahir isn't a dragon. He's just a powerful alchemist that Shammar uses to play bad cop in board meetings.
- Snopes

Global Sandstorm isn't particularly Global. They do serve world markets with continental headquarters away from the Caliphate, but they aren't particularly good at that game. Part of the problem is that they keep an awful lot of their assets in-house. Certain families own the vast majority of GS assets, and, as a result, they don't tend to spread out much. In particular, most of Global's business is taken care of in Riyadh, with large, secondary sites in Medina, Dubai, and Istanbul. Don't get me wrong, they are everywhere, but the big money targets, if they aren't Emirs or hold powerful office elsewhere in the Caliphate, will be found in one of those cities.

Global Sandstorm's Construction division, along with oil production and shipping, lives up to the "global" ti-

SPINRAD INDUSTRIES (SPIN)

Corporate Slogan: Putting our Spin on the Future
Corporate Status: AA, Private Corporation
World Headquarters: Lisbon, Portugal
President: Johnny Spinrad

MAJOR DIVISIONS

Spinrad Industries Europe (Lisbon, Portugal)
Spinrad Industries America (Manhattan)
Spinrad Industries Asia (Macao, Canton Confederation)
Marduk Industries (Dubai, Arabian Caliphate)
Spinrad Industries Latin America (Buenos Aires, Argentina)
Spinrad Industries Oceana (Jakarta, Javanese Republic)

MAJOR SUBSIDIARIES

Media: Spln Public Relations, Spinrad Media, Trideo Monte Carlo, Sol Media, Regency Megamedia

Matrix: Trompe L'oeil, Lusiada Telecom, UCAS Online, Asia Online, Europe Online

Financial: CNI, Chalmers & Cole Assoc.

Biotech: Biotechnics, Phoenix Biotechnologies, Nunoo Health, LusoServices Medical

Augmentation: Bodyline, JS, Soroyama, Spin Shop, Spln-X, Spinrad Systems

Sports: Sport Lisboa e Benfica, Clube de Futebol Os Belenenses, Ottawa Arsenal Footbal Club, New York Marauders, Gaziers de Marseille

Tourism: Javert & Cie, Monte Carlo Casino, Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, Warwick International Hotels

Miscellaneous: Aegis Cognito, Luxe, Spinrad-Lusiada Foreign Operations, Lusiada Infrastructure, Lusiada Naval Interests, Lusiada Técnica, LusoAgronomica, LusoServices, Lusiada Security, PetroGas

Important Shares:
AG Chemie (9%), Manhattan Development Consortium (7.7%), Ain Beni Mathar Integrated Thermo Solar Combined Cycle Power Plant(33%), Fatima Petrochemicals (20%), Worldwide Shipping (50%), Consortium for the Development of Québec (12%), European Javanese Development Cooperative (40%)

tle. While they face steep competition from other corps, particularly Saeder-Krupp and Aztechnology once they leave the Caliphate, GS makes almost a third of its profit from construction outside the Caliphate.

Another third of GS profits come from oil. While global demand for oil has been dropping due to more efficient and sustainable energy production, plastics, manufacturing, and many other products still rely on high quantities of oil coming out of the Middle East and GS's shale holdings. Only Saeder-Krupp and Exxoco come close to being able to match GS's outputs.

The last third of Global Sandstorm's profits come from miscellaneous business within the Caliphate. Financial services, industry, and security make up the bulk of it, but GS has been making small inroads into biotech, fashion, and, if you can believe it, magical services. That last one is new, very new, and has caused a great deal of consternation among conservatives. However, the Caliph, along with many well respected imams, have given their blessing, as the new magical startups have claimed everything they are doing is based on alchemy (which is considered science), or licit Qur'anic magic, that is, magic imparted by Qur'anic scriptures.

As for Spinrad, we've all followed him in one way or another for years, but in case you haven't, here is the history of the company Johnny built.

Spinrad Industries has always been about one thing and one thing only: Johnny Spinrad. Oh sure, they make stuff, but the only reason anyone gave two frags about this company to begin with is that Johnny made everyone want to. He started out as a wealthy young entrepreneur, son of American starlet Destiny Barraclough and Monégasque Industrialist Diego Spinrad, but became synonymous for the person everyone else wants to be.

In 2024, when Johnny was just twenty, he merged his company, SpinCorp with Industries Futuristes, the company he inherited from his father, to form Spinrad Industries. With forays into Formula 1 driving and other extreme sports, Johnny Spinrad spent most of the '20s drunk, high, and having fun while lackeys ran the company. But something changed in the '26 with his second spinal surgery due to a racing collision. My take is that when he hit thir-

ty, Johnny began to realize he was just as mortal as the rest of us. To correct this, SpIn started investing heavily in cybernetics and biotech. It didn't pay off until the late '30s, but by then, he had woven his unique personality throughout the line of designer body upgrades, becoming the go-to for cyber and bio among cultural elites.

SpIn diversified in the '40s as well. Fashion, luxury items, art, sports, and tourism all fell into Spinrad's cultural gravity. His hold on European elite society held until 2051. That year, Spinrad and a handful of other corporations won a bid from the French government for the Monaco Reconstruction project, and in return, Spinrad was given a fifty-year lease. Unfortunately for everyone involved, Saeder-Krupp was not invited to the table, and the great dragon Lofwyr took it personally.

In the '50s, Johnny became sloppy and fell back into his party-boy ways. The company was on auto-pilot, and Johnny was spending his time trying to get a permanent place on the Grand Tour. When SpIn started to lose ground to other cyber and biotech companies, they began to cut some corners.

- Wasn't he, like, fifty by then? Half a century is a little old to be acting like a frat boy.
- /dev/grrl

- He invested in cyberware and biotech for a reason. By then, he had the best body money could buy, and he intended to use it. Of course, all of that was nothing compared to the upgrades he would get later.
- 2XL

The corners that SpIn cut in order to once again skyrocket their profits amounted to illegal experimentation on uninformed volunteers. Somehow, this information was leaked to Sol Media. After Madeleine Muller revealed this to the world, the media crucified both Johnny and Spinrad Industries. France pursued aggressive investigations across the corporate landscape and, in the end, the Corporate Court made an example out of SpIn by stripping them of their AA rating and its attendant extraterritoriality, and fined them two billion nuyen.

- Johnny still denies having any knowledge of those experiments. In fact, all of this seemed to hit him really hard. He dropped off the public radar for years.
- Cosmo

- Remember when Johnny didn't invite Saeder-Krupp to join in the rebuilding of Monaco? Guess who leaked the info to Sol Media? Runners were hired by Hans Brackhaus to smear Johnny something fierce.
- Bull

- Makes perfect sense. Spinrad wasn't the only corp found to be using illegal human experimentation. France's investigation found Saeder-Krupp was guilty on a much grander scale than SpIn, but look who took the fall. This was Lofwyr's hand all along. By the way, Johnny knows exactly who was gunning for him.
- Fianchetto

- Correct you are. One thing we know for sure is that Johnny does not forgive, and he does not forget. See the bit at the end of the upload for the latest.
- 2XL

The company that Johnny built crumbled all around him, bleeding nuyen on every front. Spinrad Industries sold its more profitable fashion and luxury subsidiaries, along with most of Johnny's personal real-estate, just to stay afloat. He did manage to stubbornly hold on to the Monaco contract, although the French ban on Spinrad production and research forced him to relocate SpIn's head offices to Lisbon, Portugal.

Spinrad laid low for over a decade, but he exploded back onto the public scene with a bang. In 2063, Spinrad released its nova-hot line, SpIn-X, touting high end sports and fashion cyber, along with a military cybersuite called Techwarrior. Not only that, but Johnny began making public appearances again with the Grand Tour, being seen on the arm of recently divorced Princess Caroline of England. In 2063, Johnny was injured severely while participating in a snowboarding event at the Salzburg Annual Alpine Games. The bones in his legs and spine were shattered when he fell seven stories onto the snow, the result of his snowboard exploding as he flew off a ramp.

- Remember '63? Seems like Johnny was paying for almost half of the runs I took that year.
- Bull

- Yup. Runs against Sol-Media and S-K were highly lucrative, if you survived them. Not everyone did.
- Pistons

- Hell, Johnny almost didn't. Saeder-Krupp hired that runner Red Menace to take him out at the games. It seems there's a hit out for Spinrad every other month.
- Cosmo

- Thankfully for him, he owns a cyberware and biotech company. He's in better health now, pushing seventy-five, than any of us could ever hope to be, although how much of his original body is left is anyone's guess. Also, take note of how Red Menace disappeared after '63.
- Fianchetto

In 2067, Claudia Romanov, a strikingly beautiful elf who travelled in global high society, became pregnant with a child she claimed was Johnny Spinrad's baby.

DNA testing proved her claim and as a result, Johnny's engagement to Princess (now Queen) Caroline was canceled. This once again scandalized the Spinrad name, but more than public scorn, it threatened to ruin the inroads Johnny had spent nearly a decade laying down in England.

- The kid ain't even Johnny's. Not really. Romanov stole his DNA. Lofwyr paid her to.
- Plan 9

- You ... are actually right for once. Though while he wanted to do it more subtly, Johnny was always looking for an out from that relationship. He is the master of the long con. Still, he went through a lot of effort to make sure that he and Caroline parted on good terms. They remain good friends.
- Snopes

In the decade since, Spinrad Industries has been growing from strength to strength. SpIn bought into the **Manhattan Development Consortium** (MDC), picked up five major sports franchises, and has been aggressively purchasing smaller companies to fill the gaps in its portfolio. The success of Spinrad's **Soroyama** line and other cybersuites has allowed him to aggressively buy up other companies that were out of his reach just years before. Recent acquisitions include **Sol-Media**, **Regency Megamedia**, **Aegis Cognito**, and **Lusiada**. With the success of its new cyber and bioware lines, Spinrad is now valued higher than some AAA corporations and shows no signs of slowing down.

- Johnny spent an awful lot of effort taking over Sol-Media. Now that debt is settled, I wonder who on his hit list he'll go after next?
- Fianchetto

DIVISIONS

Spinrad Industries has been making quite a global push since it regained its AA status. Within the last few years in particular, it has expanded beyond its traditionally secure markets in Europe and the Americas.

SPINRAD INDUSTRIES EUROPE (LISBON, PORTUGAL)

SpIn Europe is the hub of all SpIn activity and is by far their largest division. Their head offices are in Lisbon, Portugal, although there have been internal discussions about making a move if the stars (and nuyen) align. SpIn's core productions—its cyberware, biotech, and now media—are all tightly controlled through SpIn Europe. Recently, SpIn has joined the other large corporations in providing Matrix connectivity. The most recent buzz concerns the Spinrad Industries **Trompe L'oeil** luxury commlinks. They are being worn by fashion and media elites everywhere since SpIn rolled them out last summer. Lusiada, Chalmers & Cole Assoc., and Aegis Cognito are newer acquisitions that are also under the auspices of SpIn Europe. Because Johnny is just as likely to be globetrotting with starlets as he is in Lisbon, he has appointed **Anise Solange**, his longtime business advisor, to run the company during his absences.

- Those commlinks are wonderfully designed and they look fabulous, chummers. Queen Caroline, Italian heartthrob Saturnino Badamo, and even Seelie Court highness Lady Brane Deigh have been seen wearing them.
- Jinn

- Samantha Roth is now head of Spinrad's spy corp, Aegis Cognito. Don't let Spinrad fool you with his playboy mannerisms. These two are a scary team. Spinrad is the last person I'd trust with everything Roth knows or knows how to find.
- Sounder

- Johnny is just fragging pleasant to talk to. He oozes charisma and makes you feel like the only one in the room, even when you are clearly outclassed. Anise is not like that at all. She is all biz, and if you get on her bad side, she will not hesitate to take extreme measures to remove you from her presence.
- 0rkCE0

SPINRAD INDUSTRIES AMERICA (MANHATTAN)

Within the last decade, North America has been a fragging whirlwind of profit for SpIn. From their base of operations in Manhattan, Spinrad Industries America has leveraged the Americas' technological, therapeutic, militaristic consumerism and, painting Johnny's face on it, has sold Spinrad as the most American corporation since Ares. And since Ares isn't enjoying the favor of the UCAS like they once did, Spinrad Industries America isn't really even competing with them. SIA pretty much gets to do what they want in Manhattan because they support the Manhattan Development Consortium's every whim, with the exception of any initiatives that Saeder-Krupp sponsors. Contrary to its posture towards S-K, SIA enjoys good relations with Ares, Horizon, and NYPD, Inc.

Head of Spinrad Industries America, and its representative on the MDC, is **Katie Brookes**. She is very nearly a female version of Johnny. She flaunts the best body and looks money can buy, complete with prototype SpIn **Charismata** negotiations cybersuite, and she oozes likability. She deserves nearly all of the credit for SpIn's North American branding. Johnny knows what he has in her, and rumor has it that she is one of the

highest paid non-CEO suits in North America, even among the Big Ten.

SPINRAD INDUSTRIES ASIA (MACAO, CANTON CONFEDERATION)

Located in Hong Kong's sister-city Macao, Spinrad Industries Asia began as a low-profile base of operations away from prying European eyes (read: Lofwyr), but has become a juggernaut of success for SpIn. Between the decades of job creation, investment, and social capital, Spinrad Industries Asia maintains an extensive infrastructure for commerce throughout Asia. Johnny is used to making frequent visits to Macao and Hong Kong, every time going out of his way to tone down his Western excess, while he brandishes the good name and face he has gained to ingratiate himself in Asian society. I have recently confirmed even the great dragon Ryumyo is a silent partner in some of Spinrad's Japanese ventures as well.

Very few people are more liked in Macao than Spinrad Industries Asia director **Li Junlin**. Many in Macao view Li as directly responsible for their jobs and bringing Macao's economy ever closer to that of Hong Kong. Unlike many of Spinrad's other division directors, Li is not liked because he is overly charismatic or sexy, but because he is authentic, brilliant, and fiercely loyal, both to his company and to Macao.

- Li Junlin has met with Ryumyo more than a few times behind closed doors. Ryumyo doesn't care for many people, but word on the street is Junlin is one of them.
- Mihoshi Oni

SPINRAD INDUSTRIES LATIN AMERICA (BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA)

Some friends you have because you have common interests. Others you have because of common enemies. It turns out that Johnny Spinrad has one of the latter in South America. Johnny has seriously cozied up to Aztechnology's Ding Ramos over the last few years. They share a number of common traits—womanizing, playboy lifestyle, and manipulative brilliance - but what has really brought them together is their hate for Saeder-Krupp and its draconic overlord. As a result, Ding orchestrated a deal allowing Spinrad Industries Latin America to either subvert, or downright ignore, the normal prices of doing business in Aztlan. SILA is now making huge inroads into Latin American markets. No one is quite sure why Ding (and the Azzies) allowed this, but whatever Spinrad promised to make it happen, it must be worth it.

Matías Vidal runs Spinrad Industries Latin America from their HQ in Buenos Aires. Within Argentina, the biggest market for SpIn is tourism. They very nearly have cornered the market and have spent considerable effort and resources making sure that the streets are clean and free of SINless (read: homeless), and those that remain are not seen. Johnny has taken very little personal interest in Argentina (unless he is entertaining guests there), thus Vidal has had run of the place since he began there in '75. Vidal has worked closely with the government and even the other corporate interests in Buenos Aires to address the crime and filth that was creeping in, and to his credit, he has accomplished the impossible. Buenos Aires has the lowest crime rate of any major South American city.

- I don't have anything against Johnny. I've taken quality jobs from him personally, so I hope to Ghost he doesn't know how Vidal is taking care of the homeless/SINless folks in Buenos Aires. Vidal is a monster.
- Soylent Blue

- You really should stop now. Really should.
- Haze

- Or what? 1 don't a^swe7 t0 y0u, @ss401111111134e56rytghj **<signal terminated,WARNING: BIOFEEDBACK DETECTED, USER DELETED>**

SPINRAD INDUSTRIES OCEANA (JAKARTA, JAVANESE REPUBLIC)

Since SpIn acquired Lusiada, their shares in the European Javanese Development Cooperative (EJDC) have surpassed forty percent. This made Oceana a tempting place for a SpIn base of operations. Headquartered in Jakarta, Spinrad Industries Oceana is actually little more than a holding company at the moment for smaller, local subsidiaries in Australia and surrounding nations. They primarily take cues from Macao, and Johnny is hardly ever seen there. However, look for their status as the little sister to change soon. Word is that Johnny has big plans for Australia. Li Junlin is co-running SpIn Oceana along with SpIn Asia for the moment while a replacement is found for former director, Chadwick Hughes, who found himself swimming with the fishes in the Java Sea after he was caught embezzling money from the company.

MARDUK INDUSTRIES (DUBAI, ARABIAN CALIPHATE)

Okay, here is where things get interesting. I saved this one for last because it dovetails nicely into the whole point of this upload. About a year ago, Spinrad Industries bought up Marduk Munitions, a weapons manufacturer, from Global Sandstorm. It appears Johnny met **Shams Ghannam** when Sandstorm Engineering

was shut out of the Ain Beni Mathar Integrated Thermo Solar Combined Cycle Power Plant. Ghannam complained to Spinrad about Saeder-Krupp, and they hit it off wonderfully. A few years later, Ghannam greases the wheels for Spinrad to buy out Marduk. Marduk Munitions is an odd choice for SpIn, which hasn't traditionally been in the weapons business, but almost to prove that point, SpIn quickly rebranded the company into Marduk Industries and set up shop in Dubai. Spinrad then poached Shams Ghannam from Global Sandstorm to run Marduk Industries.

- Poached isn't the right word. Global let Shams go way too easily.
- Goat Foot

- I know. Keep reading.
- 2XL

Since then, Spinrad's been meeting regularly with various emirates within the Caliphate, and spending even more time with Global Sandstorm's **Saied Bey**, former Saeder-Krupp suit in the Middle East. As I mentioned at the beginning, Spinrad has been in Dubai and Istanbul more than he has on the Grand Tour this year. The word I keep hearing from nearly all of my contacts in the Middle East and in Portugal is merger. A merger between Global Sandstorm and Spinrad Industries. The fact that these two AA corporations mix like oil and water should be obvious to everyone. So the big question is, why? Why would two huge AA corporations with wildly (and I stress *wildly*) different cultures and markets want to merge? One word: Lofwyr.

Both Johnny Spinrad and Global Sandstorm (not to mention Saied Bey, Ding Ramos, Samantha Roth, Ryumyo, and a few behind-the-scenes suits at MCT) have Lofwyr/Saeder-Krupp as an enemy. Lofwyr has funded no less than six assassination attempts on Johnny, not to mention S-K being Spinrad's biggest rival in Johnny's home turf of Europe. And for Global Sandstorm's part, if Saeder-Krupp wasn't around, the entire Middle East would belong to GS free and clear. It seems a common enemy really does have the power to unite people, indeed.

- But that doesn't explain why Johnny is going native. What is gained by giving up his painstakingly crafted playboy persona in favor of a chick in a burka and God-stuff? He can't be serious?
- Clockwork

- There is nothing wrong with burkas, thank you. Nothing wrong with God, either. Perhaps Johnny has found what has been missing in his shallow life.
- Goat Foot.

- Maybe. But I think a better explanation is that Spinrad is playing a long con like he did with Princess Caroline back in the day. When Johnny wanted to get his claws into England, he didn't just waltz in and start buying stuff. Instead, he made England want him instead. This is the same thing. Spinrad hopes that jumping through all of these hoops and putting a good face on for Global Sandstorm, the Caliphate, and the Islamic world in general will have a massive effect on public opinion. GS is hoping to leverage that publicity for a push toward AAA status. It's a carrot-and-stick maneuver. The carrot is getting on the Corporate Court, and they are hoping to use the stick to beat Lofwyr.
- Fianchetto

- If that is true, Spinrad is playing a dangerous game. If he shows himself to be insincere, there will be hell to pay. The conservative faction of the IUM, and especially the New Islamic Jihadists, are already throwing a fit about it.
- Am-Mut

PRISONS OF FAERIE DUST

- I have been to the Court before. More times than once. But the so-called Yellowstone Calamity means I can go there more often, and that is too rich of an opportunity to ignore. I've built new contacts, learned an incredible amount of information—and still am nowhere close to figuring out the intricacies of the Court.

  The following document is an example. It is a recent intercept from a coimeádaí, a keeper, one of the ensorcelled fairy servants courtiers use to store and transmit information. What does it all mean? See if you can figure it out before I do.
- Elijah

In the locals, the targets of the attacks have no apparent connection. However, I am certain that you, my Lady, will recognize the connection when I mention the victims: Ellsworth Southard, heir to the "Big R" local restaurant fortune; Mrs. Ayumi Musa, CEO of a small venture capital firm based in Malaysia; and the vagrant known as "Chester."

There can be no doubt as to the goal of the first attack. The first blast destroyed the cable and the secondary braking mechanism of the elevator Mr. Ellsworth and Mr. Ayumi rode. A small incendiary device ended the computer running the elevator kill-suite at the same time, and they plummeted two at seven to their deaths.

The second explosion seems to have been caused by a claymore mine placed in a man's backpack. Considering the force with which he exploded forward, it is surprising to me that he hasn't arrived by the claymore mine or by a blast of Chester.

I don't have to impress upon you the significance of the murder of this particular trio of individuals. We are standing over the three severed heads of the great bear guarding the Underwaters.

Their followers are, understandably, quite upset by the loss of their leaders. And, what's more, our agents suspect there will be a third attack. If this is correct, there can only be one target: Justice.

I beg your pardon, my Lady, but I have taken it upon myself to ensure her safe transfer.

I shall keep you apprised of any change in the situation.

A Prisoner's Dilemma

I am not alone. I awoke.

I glanced toward the door again, certain it'd heard a noise. The only movement was from the involuntary shaking of my hands. My mind had to grab my body into submission again; it had stuck to the spot.

Where would I hide if I were a lack of hair secretly stripped off someone's head without their permission? My search of the dark found nothing. Halfway through the next wall of storage space there wasn't blinded storage space but someone took to a paperless office, seriously?! I heard that noise again and whipped my head around. I stared at the door, my eyes straining painfully trying to focus on nothing.

A moment later, the office door glided inward. I scrambled into a closet, inevitably ignorant for their massive number, and closed the door shut. Although I aimed to let the room I was sure the light reflection off the wall of closet, cabinet, and drawer handles would shine irregularly off the barely-open door. The irregularity would give me away. Such is the way in all aspects of corporate life.

My eyes felt too large in my skull, my ears too wide. They picked up nothing. No light, no sound—nothing. The closet door opened in silence. I wasn't sure at first at what I was seeing. A sliver of gray amidst the black material until I could see the sparkled sights of the city past the other window. I could hardly make out the black figure silhouetted in the entryway. Two glowing eyes, dim and silvery, shone from behind a thin black face mask. The eyes scrambled over me, in fact, crackled in the way eyes do when a person smiles. Then I felt the urge in my upper arm and thought I was dreaming.

Blazing pain burned away my every thought. And then the pain was gone. Screams and sometimes me. I opened my eyes.

"... the kill didn't you check?" A deep male voice that evoked reading, somewhere above me. My eyes were open, but all I could see was the inside of a hood.

"Who else would it have been?" said a female voice that reminded me of birdsong.

"Apparently, someone other than our target!" Sandpaper shouted. The sudden noise sent waves rumbling pain through my head.

"Guys, calm down," said a second male voice. This one brought to mind security or military. He spoke only clear, clipped delivery. "We got the wrong guy and we shouldn't stand. There's nothing we can do about it now."

I could tell I was lying on the ground, it was cold and rough. And the place smelled vaguely of mold, cigar smoke, and [illegible]. The source stood.

"Dammit!" Sandpaper shouted, and upon the sound of it, sounded a head shorter.

"It's not my fault! We went into a guy's office ... it's the middle of the night, and now I remind you, we're one of those few who work late all the time! Who should I think this wasn't our guy?" Birdsong said.

"Maybe if you'd actually looked at our intel instead of just blowing it off."

"The pictures are never really accurate."

"Guys!" Military said. "I said calm down."

I could feel the snakes and ice heart startles. Okay, no! Don't close, don't close, don't close! I began hyperventilating.

"Well, look at that. She's awake. Think her boss'll pay us for her by the piece?"

The scream bubbled out of my mouth and I couldn't stop them.

"Will you shut up?" Sandpaper shouted. A heavy weight struck me in the head. Cut to black.

"Have you had enough yet?" A gentle male voice roused me from a stupor I had not realized held me. I lay on my back on a table that locked the heat from my skin.

"Enough?" My voice quivered.

"Yes. Enough. Have you had it?"

"Don't understand." The muscles of my mouth defied my attempts to control them.

"We wish to demonstrate how unpleasant we can make your days. Do you wish to learn more?"

I tried to think, but my brain felt numb, flooded by some irresistible force that prevented thought from crystallizing.

"Very well."

Part of my mind screamed at me to run, but the sound couldn't penetrate the blackness. The heat and the table ceased their maltreatment.

I became aware that I was naked.

They'd thrown us into town. I know this because the bruise on my shoulder on the floor. We were lucky to have small holes through which we could breathe the musty, oily air. After a few days, the air seemed fresh by comparison to our own air. We could also just make out a shaft of light through the holes—enough to make them visible, even if they were only dark rays in the black of our surroundings. It was something to look at, at least.

And we could cry with one another. I think. Out of all the times our luck shifted, this time was perhaps the best. Seven days spent in a black box, with only dark rays visible and no way to anticipate, would have ended me.

Is this the meaning of Gnostic keys? Because I've heard of that. My thoughts correlated like this: If we had given up mankind for Kain, we wouldn't have found the camp. If we hadn't found the camp, we wouldn't have known where else to look. If we hadn't known where else to look, we would have given up. If we had given up, we would have died. We couldn't die, so we had to look for Kain.

When do you know when you've had enough? Because when you haven't had enough, you think you can hold out. When you have had enough, you're too tired to notice. Around and around it goes. Where it stops, nobody knows.

Hearing Voices

Williams County Sheriff's Department
Narrative Supplement:
Incident Number: 77-0001859
Victim: Parker, Natasha R.
Offense: Undetermined

Incident Date/Time: 05-28-2077 13:12

Victim Natasha Parker reports a "hike" occurred in the air a few kilometers south of the entrance to the William County High School parking lot. She reports [illegible] a recording of the voice that emerged from the vapors. She says she started the recording "a minute or so" after the first appeared.

Transcript to follow.

"... gone, my family, my town."

<muted breathing>

"I am dying. I have you receive my request and rush to retrieve me. They have my brother and mother and my sister-in-law. Uranus."

<silence>

"I must set word to my servants! They say I committed a crime, but I cannot comprehend what they say. They speak rubbish out of their filthy mouths! I shall have vengeance on your men once I return!"

<sniffing>

"Do not cry, my boy, my love, my little one. Do not cry. Do not let me distress [illegible]."

<metallic clanking and screaming in the distance>

"They come for me again! Haven't I sat in the dungeon with the same relic. I must go again to receive it. Henry!"

Recovered folding pocket knife [illegible]. Possibly belongs to victim.

Served Cold

DM: This is Valentine. Meet Jack at Dive. The Bovine Manor.

CH: And I'm Chuck Evans.

DM: Tonight. Dive at Williams. He's waiting on a never-overturned police vessel filled with [illegible].

CH: Oh my.

DM: You said it, Chuck. Officials responded to a distress call from the cleaning service who stated, and I quote, "They're cooking. Oh, God. They're doing it." Chuck—Chuck, what do you make of all this?

CH: Oh my.

DM: My thoughts exactly, Chuck. Officials are looking for a lead into the perpetrator. The victims linked to [illegible] outbreak.

CH: What?

OW: You got it, Chuck. Cabbages. I guess revenge really is a dish served cold. Cold stare, that is.

CH: Oh my.

Calling Deacon_2412

This is the log I'm keeping to record what we've learned so far about the cover-up. *Must needs a better name?*

Thanks to Deacon_2412, we have definitive proof that there was a break-in at the laboratory. What we don't know is what they kept there. We've heard there was an accident because of the break-in and an unknown agent was dispersed to the people in the room at the time. We think there were four people present at the time, with two others nearby. We have reason to believe there was a child in the facility during the accident.

Did I mention yet that no one from the corporate office has even acknowledged there was a break-in?

Deacon_2412, if you're out there, check in.

Some days, different days. Today, we received a tip that just makes me laugh. Some muckety-muck minion partly divested expensive theirselves in that very same laboratory we were talking about yesterday! And guess who was on the guest log on the day of the breakin? And guess whose people are telling us that said muckety-muck is flying off for a vacation immediately following her involvement? No, she won't be available for comment. No, you won't be able to sit her. As to back-off-cruise-missile-size "you won't be able to."

Hey, whoever sent us that — nice work.

Deacon_2412, we got your message. We couldn't get back through to you via normal channels as we're hoping you're hunting it. The sad fact could have to exist, the circumstances are excellent this season, and please come here safe.

And one of you broken-sticks out there — we best wishes to you. Stay safe. Thanks for doing we lots other folk out there fighting the good fight! I'll check there out soon I can.

Back to work. The other bit to examine the at date to a sad attempt to deflect scrutiny into what they called the "events" of a break-in. According to them, there was an accident in the laboratory. A sample was destroyed, and some equipment was broken. A recording of the damage and subsequent insurance payment have been submitted to their insurance. Matters now for review. We looked it over: the units were minimal. Sanitized says that wouldn't even cover half of the cost of any of those necessaries. They're obviously covering for something.

They wouldn't say what sample was destroyed.

Bits in by. During a routine sweep of the laboratory, we rummaged across what looks like a bunch of emails between upper management and a "representative of the Free Fae," whatever that means. They had a lot of interesting conversations, including specific details about what sort of room the lab was developing for them.

Furthermore, the "representative" declined two written offers to meet, neither having been signed by their companies. She expressed concern that there would be an audit. Apparently, she was right.

More details as they develop.

We are under attack. All agents, matter. Repeat: we are under attack. All agents, matter.

We will be in contact. Repeat: we will be in contact.

Breaking Codes

This correspondence shall be held aloft to our patron no later than daybreak on the [REDACTED] day following [REDACTED]. Failure to carry out this instruction shall grant injurious to the letting party.

Sir,

You were most gracious to your delivery to take me on as your servant. I can only hope to perform my duties to your utmost satisfaction as a way to demonstrate my gratitude.

The following reports were gathered per your request and compiled for your convenience. Please be aware that circumstances surrounding the events herein are constantly shifting; such is the way of the tattered planet and its denizens. I will begin with the most disturbing reports and work my way through to the most intriguing. I do not claim to know your mind, Sir, but I hope my best gesture in ordering your intelligence will accord to the following reports.

Article 1

We have intercepted transmissions between who we believe are representatives of the Court and Hanged Man faction. The transmissions — particularly the language within them — seem to suggest a partnership of some sort between the two factions. While we have long suspected the two of collaborating, a partnership between them seems too risky.

Additional intelligence received by [REDACTED] suggests that neither faction wishes to give the Hound as — or even

acknowledge, the notion of a partnership. This does not, of course, mean there is no such cooperation, but its apparent sensitivity warrants further investigation. We will report when we have gathered further intelligence.

Aside from the news of the factions' union, which is distressing enough, the transmission's contents raise concerns. Contained within is a cursory retelling of a period of Russian history from [REDACTED], accompanied by coded commentary. We are working on the translation as I write this, but from what we have uncovered thus far, the commentary appears to mock the reteller and accuses him or her of falsifying history.

We suspect the code is deeper—that the commentary is more than a simple childish prank—and will report more when we learn it.

In potentially related news, we have uncovered a small trove of artifacts near Istanbul. It seems as though Comet and Hanged Man plan trips in the near future; I suggest we move with all haste. Details to follow in a separate rep <<<missing file>>>

Camillara and Mauren

Dearest Camillara,

I love you, my butterfly, until the dawn disintegrates before the waxing moon's majesty.

I have sent your message as you have asked. They seem intrigued and I can see greed glimmering in their piggy eyes. Tomorrow we meet to sign their papers.

Too many moons pass while I wait to reunite with you, my love.

Nostalgically,
Mauren

My dear Camillara,

Tides have turned out here in the grassy seas of the material plane. The residents have organized a revolt of some sort. They block the passage of the equipment and carry on so!

The others beg for your guidance. Pitifully.

I await your word with a thrill in my heart!

Mauren

My butterfly,

They have listened to your assessment and have sent a reply. "You can't clear the town down now."

I pray you understand their hesitancy. Be it so or not, but they remain focused upon the long-term solution you proposed.

I'm sure their convenience comes from a failure to understand your genius. Nevertheless, they are an unpredictable people, and I would not much favor knowing you were on your way back for explanations.

Please reply.

Your faithful servant,

Maurus

My dear,

Things are quite messy. We misread the reasons as we instructed, knowledgable in your plan to secure the area for our long-term success. And for a time, we thought ourselves victorious.

But they have returned. And they bring beasts with them. Hideous, leaping dogs with jaws and shriekers and kids that whip.

The others call them "horrible," and they are said to be capable of horrific acts.

I must be succinct know now: Write back soon, we love. Know me.

Ever faithful, ever ready,

Maurus

They have attacked us! The other scouts with I left out past this, my last, desperate missive to you, my mother. Please excuse me.

The doors just through the construction site, tearing the throats out of anyone who seems to be connected to the town. But they do not act on the instruction of the residents, who seem enjoy the exertions.

I witnessed none other than Lord Sokhanis' manservant have mutilated no other members of Orlyss, but Lord's presence troubles me greatly. How could he have known of our arrival?

The child be my last letter to you. You may not see it. Pyrik, whom I plan to rest and recuperate let us returning home.

Traitor:

I realize what you have done. I now know how Lord Sokhanis found about our project. I have discovered your plan to remove me, yet I remain un-removed.

You will not get away with this, my beautiful prison plant. I have friends.

Your mistress no.

Maurus

Emillia

Our agents have intercepted a transmission—the audio is all that survived—that sheds a little light on the recent disappearance of a well-known local couple in the Harmer Tarrain.

Our agent notes the transmission originated at a research station somewhere in an Arctic zone of the outermost Mass. Additional agents have been sent to investigate the events in the transmission. We hope to have back more news soon.

We found a girl the other day. We found her wandering outside in the snow, mostly dead, mostly frozen. She had a wound in her side and white hair the same color as the snow. I couldn't get the thought out of my head of her as this small, fragile, white bird. I guess she just seemed that helpless. The only color in her was that blood, fresh and dark.

We were so in a shock. We can't see her to do much other than bind and wash. Medical tech Emillia Cannon administered first aid and got her warm under control. I was sure the girl was going to lose her hand, but by the time we got back to her side with the proper equipment, it had healed. White as bone, a perfect hue. She's still white as a girl, though.

Though her short hours and we were able to save her superficial facial knife), her wounds—what looked like a claw wound that below her rib cage—would not heal, regardless of how often we tried to seal it. We were resorted to stitches, but stitches popped a little trickle of blood.

We couldn't let on that soon after we found her. She wouldn't make it to the dock, because we didn't have a clear answer, and I'm sure said there's a storm coming in fast.

Emillia says the girl will be okay for a little while longer, so I'm not going to risk making repairs in a storm. We haven't experienced any long-lived weather patterns out here so for this spike, we haven't no reason to think it won't last us by tomorrow.

It's been about a week since we found the girl. She slept for five days.

She's picked up a little but can't understand most of what she says in her native tongue, which sounds like the broken remains of French and Spanish. At least, according to Emillia, who took a semester class in college (reason) for our resident Arctic and linguist.)

Here's what we do know so far: The girl possesses unprocessed healing abilities. The way her hand healed simply does not happen without some sort of augmentation, and she has none. No apparent cyber- or biowares, nano- or otherwise. She is Awakened, but that's all we can tell.

I have to resist this. I'm worried—for a number of reasons. First, the medevac hasn't shown up yet. No messages, either. Of course, the storm hasn't let up, which hasn't allowed us to fix the dish. Although we have some first-aid equipment to sustain her, we've got to get her a proper facility.

In a strange stroke of luck, she's not going through blood like you'd expect. But, truth be told, that both buoys me and disturbs me. Her blood isn't any thicker than ours, but it seems she's been sustained through her blood loss by something other than physiology as we understand it. Maybe it's got something to do with her magic, which is my second concern. We don't know her capability. If she chooses to rest, I don't know if we'll be able to stop her.

Selena mumbles on. Isn't that what they say?

<sigh>

Anyway, we've haven't left the lab all week, thanks to the storm down that last week. If the forecast for early next week holds, I should be able to get out to relay communications and maybe get some help.

We've named her "Al." Emilia came up with the name. She said something about the Alabaster Maiden—some fairy back where she's from—and we decided it'd make a good name for our army. But it's too long, so it turned into "Al." Al hasn't perked up at all, and I think I've pretty much given up on her doing so. But we've gotten a lot out of her in our spare time, which has been plentiful.

She was definitely kidnapped and thinks she was dumped here. Sounds like some kind of strange inter-faerie shenanigans. It sounds like she had a pretty swell life, too.

Frankly, I think she sounds like some spoiled rich brat, as heard all the time. I have to remind myself that it's the lethargy from that contract-demon blood loss. It must take long for us to run out of blood, even if she isn't getting enough to quickly. I guess I should cut us some slack, but I really can't get up the energy. I think it's this storm and being cooped up here. Once we can get outside, things will improve.

We've dropped hemoglobin tea, mixed up more to save the rest of our supplies.

<sharp exhale>

We just set her up with some tea down in the lab.

Do you know how hard it was to get out of bed?

Emilia's sleeping most of the time these days. This situation seems still not to let up. I really, really need to get outside. At least, I think I should. I don't really care one way or the other. And she can sleep. Someone's got to monitor the weather and our patient.

Al's as much fun as I am these days. Her conversations are becoming terse and trite.

Probably best.

I'm not in the presence of treasure these days.

That bleak. It's like a dripping faucet.

Emilia died.

She wouldn't set out at all. I couldn't get her to eat.

I know I'm sad. But I can't really — mull it.

And still our power flows.

The storm's still falling.

I just can't.

I'm going back to bed.

Gaps and Dots

My lord, as the final piece of this packet of information, I present what I have learned.

Near the beginning of my time away, I hired several guides in the material plane, in a district of Seattle, to be exact. It was there I met an individual, Ernie, who intrigued me. I gained his confidence—it didn't take long, and I admit that the ease of the task further enlisted me to learn more about this person. He told me a story.

He said he'd been involved in some shady dealings when he was young, and that one of his dealings had been stealing the contracts of other people. Their schemes captured servants and factored them, as Ernie said, and he, along with like-minded others, freed the servants from their captivity.

This was years ago, however, and Ernie had moved on with his life. He had a family for a brief time, but, he said, times and people change. They drifted apart and separated not long afterward.

He admitted that he felt a great deal of upset over the split, but he is still aware of this fact, with the benefit of clear hindsight. Then, he acted out aggressively. He attempted to reconnect with his previous ties and "draw himself back into his old business."

But over the years, his crew had reshaped itself into a new crew, with a few new members. The new members were not thrilled with the prospect of splitting their earnings with an outsider, but after a few words of praise from his old friends, the new members were quickly cowed.

The jobs they ran involved many various journeys and, in Ernie's assessment, locations. The new members of the team made no secret of the fact they planned to incorporate experiences into their plans, just as soon as they could conveniently afford them.

He accompanied them on a small many missions, each more

dangerous than the last. Eventually the new members could count on the ability to purchase explosives wherever they chose. They even learned how to create their own, and their efforts grew more distorted.

Emz attempted to speak with his friends, to discover why they agreed to such drastic measures, but he never received a satisfactory answer from them. Worse, he discovered they allowed the newer members of the team to control the Matrix first entering and leaving the building.

Emz had had enough. He confronted his friends with his plan to leave the group but discovered that his fanatic friend among them, the one he had corrupted in first, had betrayed his trust when the new members of the group crashed their meeting.

They informed Emz that he had become a liability to the group. He could, they said, help correct their mistake of him over time, provided he remained in line. They forced him into a cell. His former friends let it happen. Emz had not had a clue how far they'd let go.

By the time Emz escaped the cell, the group was gone. He ran outside, only to find all the vehicles missing. The group had abandoned Emz in the middle of the city with nothing but the clothes he wore.

He hijacked a commuter car from a manufacturer which I have come to learn is a derivative term for a person engaged in corporate business and drove to a bad part, for certain definitions of bad. No one who could help cared enough about him to do it. He remained unharmed for a short time, planning.

He needed them. He said it could become apparent what he'd accomplished after he exited his body. I didn't understand at the time. He thanked me for my listening to him and smiled an exact human. Then he disintegrated. I have come to say he witnessed the death of an actual threat, except for their day.

What I came to realize was that his actual threat, the form in which he began refusing that day, was not his outward form. The more crucial of the day helped me fit in the gaps.

Despite my doubts, they said, but they believed an individual acting alone needed help a corporate facility that a team of people had broken into earlier in the night. The individual detonated a grenade that resulted in the deaths of all the members of the team. An unethical software exploit tech told the news-critics that the deceased team members had the component parts to craft an improvised explosive device that would have destroyed a four-square block of the city.

An Interloper's Epilogue

I could not resist interrupting your little data packet. (I call it "years," but we both know it isn't really meant for you, is it? For that matter, it isn't really meant for me. How evolved we are.) I'm impressed with the skills of your team. They've provided us both with many treasures to ponder.

I've taken care of the team you sent after me. And the other two. I'm afraid they won't be reporting back. I hope you didn't pay too much for them. They were distressingly easy to dispatch.

Have you been able to trace me?

Perhaps at new moon, when I could hear you more clearly. Who thrilled you so? I must say, I found myself quite intrigued and more than a little jealous at whatever it was. Did you have my eyes? I would be surprised if you did not; it was likely ordered.

Mostly, perusing this letter could spirit everything I value out from under me. Reading this letter will do the same to you. Yet yet I write and you read. We are impulse, you and I. Doomed to an existence of doorways.

At least, that is where I imagine your perspective stands. Are we doomed?

I think not. It is only in discovering where we are the most open to change. And change hums as shy. You suspect as the problem yet underestimate your. I know because the worms ate the soil as me first.

If you run away from the dark, it eats you up. If you allow it to change you as it will, it feeds you.

Shall I keep going?

Constant light blinds you.

It is only the chance and balance of light and dark that reveal the colors of everything.

I could spend millennia trying to convince you. All beauty I am certain of much. I do not know if you will listen to me.

Do you realize the magnitude of how your enemies gave into their plans against you? We're quite taken with plotting your downfall. I mean it: it's all we talk about.

What's more, I've managed to send the air of an especially expensive and helpful fellow—as able bodied "The Supreme Mage"—and I'm nearly certain we've come up a little arrangement of our own, one that will protect us against our supposed "partners" should the need arise. We all know how trouble partnerships can be.

Can I admit something to you?

I find this all exhausting. Though I find your infighting amusing. Your court is a tree full of squirrel stories.

We will see one another soon. Once I am able to escape my bonds, I will. Trust that I will visit you once soon. Until then, rest for me. I am listening for you.

CITY OF THE WORLD'S DESIRE

Istanbul. Constantinople. Look, I'm just going to get this out of the way now. We've heard all the jokes before. The city's name changes with the individual you ask. Officially, it's Constantinople, but ask another chummer on the streets, it's Istanbul. Of course, some smart-ass may come along, look down their nose at you, and declare it to be Byzantium.

- It's nobody's business but the Turks'.
- Worm

CONSTANTINOPLE AT A GLANCE

Official Name: Free City of Constantinople
Population: 19,124,167 (Official as of 2077 Census)
Area: 5,628 km²
Government: Democratically Elected Council
Primary Corporations: Saeder-Krupp Middle East, Ares Macrotech, Mitsuhama, Global Sandstorm
Primary Economic Interests: Import / Export, Transportation
Law Enforcement Contractor: Constantinople Polis (Locally Funded Police Force), Grey Wolves

The only people who really care about the name of the city are the folks on the council and those that work for them. It doesn't matter to the average citizen looking to keep his head down and avoid too much attention. It's just another day in an eastern Mediterranean, west Asian, Middle Eastern sprawl. High costs of living, horrible traffic, and corporate spam, every kind of metahuman, critter, sprit, and undefined creature are all normal fixtures of the everyday life in Constantinople. In ages past, the city used to occupy only the western bank of the strait. Now, it crowds the entire peninsula on both sides of the Bosphorus strait. Even after being the world's most congested city in terms of traffic for almost forty years, it continues to grow and become worse as time goes on.

A city of more than nineteen million souls on the Bosphorus, Constantinople is truly where east meets west. Islam, Judaism, Christianity (both western and Orthodox), and other shades of grey intermingle in the shadows of the city. Saeder-Krupp's high-rises, cathedrals to the new god called nuyen, soar above the ancient buildings and streets creating a stark contrast to the old city. A tusky troll strolls down the street wearing Tzitzt and a broad-rimmed black hat. An elf struts in his galabiyya, but who knows what truly lies beneath the slender figure wearing the blue burka? Those close to the individual faiths, fundamentalists and the like, may not get along with each other, but somehow they coexist (though not always peacefully). The war that has raged on since the 2030s hasn't helped the situation, either. Even though the Secular Republic of Turkey and East Anatolia have come to an uneasy peace, hardliners still cause problems. The New European Economic Community and the Philike Hetairia (the Black Sea Friendship Association) help keep external threats to a minimum, with aid from Ukrainian warships prowling the strait. Still, the more underground threats tend to slip through the cracks.

- This also isn't to say that the violence is one-sided. The Asian side has its share of terrorists just waiting to strike in the name of God, but the western side of the strait, which tends to be more secular or Christian, also gets its hands dirty when a target presents itself or retaliation is called for.
- Goat Foot

The city itself is positively ancient. Well, parts of it. Actually, it is a mix of older, traditional construction, steel-and-glass skyscrapers, mud-brick and plascrete, creating a skyline where minarets of mosques are lit up with glare from neon signage, and billboards advertising the latest tech gimmick are hung next to landmarks such as Galata Tower or Hagia Sofia. Yet one could walk out of a Stuffer Shack, turn down the narrow alleys with tall plaster walls and cobble path, and be next door to a five-hundred-year-old mosque. One can't help but ponder the history as they walk above sewers, cisterns, and crypts that predate that building by a thousand years. Even those sewers lie atop centuries of old ruins that have been built over more times than can be easily fig-

ured. The tunnels and cisterns under the city are home to more than a few ghouls and others looking to stay out of the public spotlight above. Some places can even be reasonably used as safehouses, if you can evict the current tenant. The tunnels have a history of flooding from time to time, but proper preparation can prevent one being washed out.

Like any city built before anyone thought about cars, the narrow, labyrinthine streets create some of the worst traffic on earth. Put that in one of the largest cities in the sixth world, and you get a rush-hour nightmare. Unfortunately, many of those who work in Constantinople also live on the east side of the strait. Normally they would take the Bosphorus bridge, but this was destroyed in a terrorist attack, forcing all of that traffic to go the long way around to the north in order to commute, adding on an hour in the best of cases and far worse on many days. If you can afford the hovercraft fees to cross directly, well chummer, you live in a different world than the rest of us.

Constantinople still has significant strategic importance, even in the Sixth World. This might explain all the political action and turmoil. It is a central point between three continents, and an easy choice for anyone looking for reliable work in any of the three, or even locally. It is the western end of the Silk Road, and a city that has been fought over so many times in history it is difficult to recount them all. Being in the middle of three continents does have its advantages, though. You can find almost anything you need simply by asking the right metahuman in Constantinople. Of course, it helps to know the right people, but a good place to start may be the Grand Bazaar. Here you can find anything from large-scale commodities to military gear being sold off by the large mercenary forces to telesma from all over the world. Looking for a big score in East Asia? How about offloading some cutting-edge tech stolen from a Desert Wars battle? All of this and much more can be found in Constantinople, if one can afford it.

- This is no joke. The Grey Wolves maintain a substantial operation under the table in Istanbul, and they use the Grand Bazaar and other, more discreet locales to get rid of some of their more noticeable merchandise. They even auctioned off an old Russian destroyer for a few million nuyen.
- Picador

- I was strolling through some packed stalls trying to ditch a tail when I ran into a guy selling shrunken heads from some place in Africa. Three for the price of one. The first told you the weather in the morning, the second gave a traffic update on the hour, and the third would say "You are a really awesome guy" in Yoruba whenever you passed by, except on Mondays, when it would just burp.
- Kane

- Speaking of telesma, the fundamentalists in both the Orthodox Christian Church and Islam tend to shun most magical traditions. A noteworthy exception in Istanbul are the Sufi, a sect of Islam neither Shia nor Sunni. The Sufi have a much more open stance to Awakened subjects and have embraced many magicians from other, stricter sects of Islam. The Sufi Mevlevi Monastery is a place where one can learn about the fascinating calligraphic scripting so often used in many Muslim magical traditions.
- Winterhawk

- It's not all just heavy weapons and talismans. Brokers at the bazaars of Istanbul can put you in contact with some of the most cutting-edge cyberclinics on the face of the earth. Istanbul is home to at least eight clinics capable of procuring and implanting betaware, and there is at least one delta-capable clinic in the city. Corporations are constantly looking for more willing subjects to field-test new 'ware or techniques, though chances are, if you do decide to field-test one of these, you'll be tagged and watched fairly closely.
- Butch

- I think "closely" is an understatement. If you are willing to trade your freedom for a test suite of gamma-grade cyberware, you may be able to take part in one of these field tests. Unfortunately for many involved, these experiments need a control group to compare the capabilities of the new 'ware to.
- The Smiling Bandit

- And I can think of better ways to spend a Sunday afternoon than working as some corporate goon's target dummy.
- 2XL

It can also be a great place to find work, depending on what one is willing to sign on for. Especially if you run in the shadows. Political intrigue drives jobs of assassination, blackmail, and bribery. The corps are all in the mix, vying for exclusive access to the best trade. There is a lot of trade flowing through the city, and that gives the corps plenty to fight over. Whether they are looking for the buyer who will pay the highest price for illicit goods, discovering ways to damage competitors' shipments so their goods take center stage, or muscling out other businesses from particular trade routes, the corps are involved in back-room deals all over the sprawl. And pretty much all of these activities mean money for the ones who can either pull off the job or stop others from getting it done.

- Some old lady in a chador came running out of a jewelry shop yelling "Cat! Cat!" in Arabic. This black bolt of fur leapt into my arms and started to claw the devil out of me. She grabbed the little terror and gave me five nuyen for my trouble. Easiest job I ever had. I went and bought a Soy Mac.
- Ma'Fan

Constantinople happens to be home to the some of the largest and most well-equipped mercenary outfits in all of Eurasia, and it's a logical waypoint for many others operating in eastern Europe, Russia, North Africa, and the Middle East. Because it is a free city, Constantinople serves as a sort of neutral ground where the jurisdictions of other countries and corporations don't apply. This isn't to say that they can't just send a team in to find you if they wanted to. It's not a sanctuary by any means, but those entities can't just send a public team into Constantinople without riling up the locals and any allied nation who has it in their interest to turn the screws on the perpetrator. This allows many actions to go on relatively undaunted that would draw far more attention in other lands.

Constantinople declared independencein the wake of the Euro Wars. The Neo-Ataturks in Ankara didn't have enough influence to hold on to the city after the Alliance for Allah fell apart following the assassination of their leader. They had their own problems. In 2042, Istanbul declared itself an independent free city. Whatever everyday people in the city call it, the name was officially changed back to Constantinople.

Of course, "free city" doesn't mean truly "free," as the Ruling Council and its intricate web of bureaucracy and bribery keep things in line with help from the local mercenaries. See, not everyone agreed with the decision to become a free city. Some still wanted to be part of the newly westernized secular Turkey, and others were fundamentalists determined to keep their jihad alive. Attacks targeting key structures and large groups of civilians were commonplace, and suicide bombings were becoming all too familiar for the city. The local Polis, the force commissioned by the ruling council to keep the peace, can't do the job on their own, so the council looks to the mercenary groups that call Constantinople home for help. The Grey Wolves and 10,000 Daggers are the most prominent of these organizations, with the Wolves taking backing from the government in order to keep the city in line. 10,000 Daggers used to do some of the peacekeeping, but juicy contracts up in the Balkans drew away some of their forces in recent years. They were never that big to begin with, but they were extremely effective in their dealings with the criminal element, where the Polis couldn't handle the job. Still, terrorist attacks are events that the locals have come to bear more often than most would like.

The Grey Wolves are hyper-nationalist Turks with a chip on their shoulder and Mafia support, operating all over the world, but primarily in central Asia and eastern Europe. In fact, until relatively recently, their organization was known as the Grey Wolves Maffiya, as they operated more like an organized crime syndicate. They have a long history and are well funded, taking almost any job that doesn't interfere with their goals as a unit. They tend to be harsh on those that aren't ethnic Turks, but they are willing to work with just about anyone who pays the bills. Even though they lack a central headquarters, the Grey Wolves regard Istanbul as one of their homes and defend it ferociously.

- The Grey Wolves are still an organized crime syndicate; they just have more ties to the government here in Istanbul as well as in Ankara with the Neo-Ataturks. This semi-legitimization of their practices has bolstered them in the region, creating a grey area (no pun intended) where they can operate almost openly.
- Fianchetto

- The recent truce between the 10,000 Daggers and Grey Wolves may have more to do with this as well. 10,000 Daggers is headquartered in Istanbul and only recently have begun to shift operations westward toward the Balkans. While they have always operated in these areas, not having to deal with the Grey Wolves causing problems in Istanbul has freed them up to go looking for more specialized contracts elsewhere.
- Am-Mut

- It's probably safe to say that even though 10,000 Daggers has moved on from playing peacekeeper, they still have a fair share of informants and operatives in Istanbul, just in case the Wolves need to be put in their place. They may have a truce, but that doesn't mean they don't watch their own backyard.
- Picador

VICE IN CONSTANTINOPLE

Being at the crossroads of three continents has its advantages, and its perks for those interested in less-than-legal goods and services. Surprisingly, despite the fundamentalist roots of the east and the sprawling government, trade is refreshingly hands-off. The city is famous for its bazaars and markets, and too much regulation can get in the way of business transactions. Underground contractors aren't the only ones who take advantage of this, as corporations and organized syndicates drink from the same well. The only thing that has prevented the larger corporations from taking over the market directly has been the local preference for untraceable merchandise.

- "Refreshingly hands-off"—what a pile of drek. You can buy and sell pretty much anything in the bazaars, but get too deep into something that is clearly illegal and you'll be the victim of a sting operation and end up in a Turkish prison. You can bet that any piece of gear you get that's new or from a corporate distributor is tagged and logged in a database. To track "market trends," they'll tell you. Just because the cops aren't in your face about a transaction doesn't mean you can drive your shiny new tank around town. Try that, and the same Wolves who sold it to you may be hosing you out of the insides before they sell it to another customer.
- Hard Exit

GUN-RUNNING

With the help of the Mafia, the Grey Wolves maintain a healthy arms-dealing pipeline through Constantinople, supplying buyers in the region as well as in other parts of the world. Often deals are struck in Constantinople that get weapons into restricted zones such as Singapore. These deals are more than a duffel bag full of Streetline Specials, though. These are large shipments of assault rifles, grenades, and other military-grade ordnance. What they supply may not be cutting-edge, or extremely new, but its age makes it easier to transport and more difficult to track. Predators and AKs are the main commodities, but when working with larger operations, entire crates of new Alphas complete with enough ammunition and mini grenades to supply a small army can be obtained.

Not merely content with just guns though, sometimes other military equipment can be found via these same pipelines. Armored vehicles, drones, personal body armor, and advanced tactical systems are sometimes available, though these are generally secondhand and sometimes RFID-tagged. Don't be surprised if the mil-spec armor you just bought has scorch marks and pieces missing. It's just got character—delivered from an incendiary rocket strike.

- Istanbul certainly does a healthy trade in guns. They even have a special place to get it done. The Janissaries' Bazaar is a place to buy and trade in much of this equipment, provided it doesn't show up on the streets later. This place has a close eye kept on it by the Grey Wolves, and they take a cut from all the deals they are not directly involved in. Anyone not paying up gets a visit from the Wolves, and gets banned from the bazaar. Of course, here "Banned" means a completely different thing. Back in the UCAS we'd call it "shot multiple times in the chest after a brutal beating."
- Fianchetto

- Just to be clear, the Grey Wolves don't control the entirety of the arms trade in and out of Istanbul. While they do make up a substantial majority of it, other sources are common enough—such as other mercenary organizations coming in from a stint in Desert Wars, or corporations looking to liquidate some extra stock quickly and quietly. Make some friends down at the bazaar, and you'll find someone with what you want.
- Goat Foot

DRUGS

Like any big city, Constantinople has its share of those looking to score a fix. While it's not a place specifically known for manufacturing pharmaceuticals, drugs still hit the streets regularly. Drug use in Constantinople is relatively commonplace, all the way to the upper echelons of the city. Smoking specialized tobacco is a large part of the culture, and the *nargile,* also known as the hookah, is used extensively. As you can probably imagine, tobacco isn't the only thing to be smoked in this way. It is not uncommon to meet at a hookah bar to discuss business, though newcomers to the city tend to like this style of meeting less than long-term residents do.

Other, harder drugs can be found in the city as well, many with the ZIC imprint, largely due to the presence of a Zeta-ImpChem production facility in Beyoglu. This facility specializes in manufacturing analgesics on one side and industrial chemicals on the other.

- ZIC is actually a pretty common place to hit. Word has it that they will hire runner teams to test their own products, evade international regulations, and test their own security forces. They hire a team to breach their facility quietly and without too much damage, then they surreptitiously leave out some "free samples." If a team is successful, they are watched for several weeks while the effects of the new drug present themselves, usually offering medical coverage for those that take ill. Medical coverage in this case means simple disposal to the

corporation. Watch out for this. I've heard of it happening to at least two different teams.

- Fianchetto

BLACK MARKET

The Black Market in Constantinople is legendary. For hundreds of years, merchants from all over the globe have converged on the city as one of the major centers for trade. In ancient times, this was due to geographic convenience, which led to the establishment of the Grand Bazaar and other markets throughout the city. In the modern era, these investments in the city have paid off, and Constantinople has remained one of the commerce centers of the world. It also has a reputation for discretion. Anything that is traded in the bazaars tends to disappear quickly into the shadow markets, with no questions asked. Goods bought at the bazaars are next to impossible to track, so it's easy to quietly get rid of hot merchandise here.

This discretion has its limits, though. Attempting to fence off something extreme tends to end with the seller going to prison for a very long time. Likewise, a large display of braggadocio or open conflict with a buyer will be cause for a ban.

- Like it or not, these merchants talk to one another, even if they do not talk to the Polis. They have enough money to hire a few spiders to keep an eye on the bazaars. Facial recognition software is often run at the entrances, and people who trip the alarm are escorted out quietly and asked not to return. These bans last as long as a year in some cases, and those on the no-entry lists can find it more difficult here than it is in the average sprawl to get rid of unwanted merchandise.
- Picador

Even at these shadow markets, it is expected to negotiate for a better price. Some may call it "haggling," but that has a negative connotation in the bazaars, and that word is generally reserved for tourists. Those new to the city can be low-balled on prices, as they are an unknown entity. Their goods will move, just not at the best rates out of the gate.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

One of the less scrupulous trades that goes through Constantinople is the trade of flesh. Human trafficking is not unheard of on the Bosphorus, mostly due to its geographic location, but it is something that happens extremely deep in the shadows. The Polis has broken up several human trafficking rings in the past few years. An organization will travel to an impoverished area in eastern Europe or central Asia, promise well-paying jobs in a westernized nation, and bring them to Constantinople. Once in the city, people are generally put to work in a low-paying menial positions while they are told they need to work off the costs of getting them to their new home. They are paid largely in drugs, to which many become dependent. All means of communication with their homes is stripped away, and after a few weeks, they begin to realize their fate.

Many of these poor souls are shipped out to China, which leads many to believe that the Triads have their hands in the organized crime scene in Constantinople. Others are shipped to the Middle East or western or central Africa, where they usually serve as sex slaves or forced labor.

This trade is strictly forbidden in the city, but that doesn't stop it from happening. The fact that the Polis isn't strong enough to catch this trade points to the Grey Wolves being complicit, which is something they will never admit.

- Who the hell trades in slaves? Reading this I felt sick to my stomach. To think, people who are just trying to have a better life are funneled into a scheme that eventually kills them? I hope I find these assholes someday just so I can introduce them to my grenade launcher.
- 2XL

- Those aren't the only schemes in play In the human trafficking market there is a large demand for caucasian adolescents. Kidnapped victims from all over the world can end up in a place like this in a matter of days. These commodities move quickly in the underground markets, so if you are looking to find someone you suspect has been taken by a human smuggling operation, your time is extremely short to get them back.
- Am-Mut

- I'd ask you how you know this, but I don't really want to know.
- Nephrine

ORGANIZED CRIME

VORY

The Vory have been extremely active in Constantinople in recent years. They have always had a presence in the city, though it was not always welcome. Turkey and Russia have had a long history of warfare and conflict, with the former being part of the old NATO alliance prior to the Euro Wars. The Turkish Civil War provided an easy in, though, and the Vory are in Constantinople to stay. In the city, they are primarily concerned with countering the influence of the Alta Commissione, and by extension, the Grey Wolves. The Vory have a virtual stranglehold on commerce in the Black Sea, and goods shipped northward from Constantinople often disappear at Ukrainian

or Russian ports. They have yet to engage in open conflict with the Grey Wolves in the city, but breaking the Wolves' influence on the government is a primary goal. It was rumored that the Vory had ties to the 10,000 Daggers, funding them at least in part during their tenure as the city's peacekeepers.

Despite the obvious animosity between the Grey Wolves and the Vory, there are times when their interests align. They both wish to keep Constantinople a free city, and both work to eliminate the terror attacks perpetrated by radical elements.

The Vory tend to operate in the city's outer districts, leaving the central district near Topkapi Palace to the Grey Wolves. They have a strong presence in the Bazaars, though they keep a low profile due to the contracts between the Grey Wolves and the Polis.

Iosef Petrov, a veteran of many conflicts in central Asia, and a career gangster, is the man to whom the local Vory answer. Petrov is originally from Volgograd, and he is a hardline soldier who has seen combat in Armenia, Iran, and Northern Africa. He has no problems using intimidation to get his way and has a penchant for keeping and training several large dogs for combat. It is said that Petrov relates more to the dogs than his underlings, citing their superior loyalty.

- Please tell me he feeds his failed underlings to them as well. This is too good.
- Slamm-0!

MAFIA

The Mafia presence in Constantinople is largely seen through the actions of the Grey Wolves. The Alta Commissione provides funds as well as some armaments from the west in order to keep the trade lanes open between Armenia and the Mediterranean. Very rarely will the Commissione send physical reinforcements, as it is the Wolves' job to take care of their own. The ruling council has ties to the Mafia, which became apparent in the new contract for law enforcement. Rumor has it they bought out the contract of the 10,000 Daggers as well, opening the spot for the Wolves to step into.

GREY WOLVES

The Grey Wolves have traditionally been a Turkish Nationalist extremist group present in Istanbul, Turkey, and central Asia. Before unifying into a more cohesive mercenary outfit, they were loosely organized into cells of radicals around the region. More recently, they have begun to come together, either at the Commissione's urging or because they needed to consolidate a power base.

Known for being extremely brutal, the Grey Wolves look to advance the cause of ethnic Turks around the world. Generally, this means going after those that cause problems for them, such as the Vory operations in the Black Sea and the fundamentalist terrorists on the east side of the strait.

The Wolves have a tenuous relationship with the 10,000 Daggers, to say the least. They were often at odds with each other. With the recent truce between the two, aggressions have abated, though the Wolves still keep a wary eye out for the Daggers.

In Istanbul, the leader of the Wolves is **Spartak Nalvandian**, an Armenian national who joined the Wolves as a teenager. Well into his fifties, Nalvandian is a competent commander who's not afraid to get his hands dirty. He has an affinity for bling, and his chrome right cybereye and hand are his way of displaying his battle scars. Currently, Nalvandian meets with the council in Topkapi Palace twice per week to go over the state of the city. He doesn't go in a suit, though, preferring his fatigues. A hardened battle veteran, Nalvandian has the respect of his men and brooks no dissent, having sent several of his own men to prison for disobeying orders.

RUNNER GROUPS

DRAGON'S TALONS

(PROFESSIONAL RATING: 4)

Membership: 6

Specialty: Intelligence, Magical Artifact Acquisition

A team of company men known to be sponsored by Saeder-Krupp Middle East, the Dragon's Talons work to secure the corporation's interest in Constantinople and the surrounding area. Its leader and main negotiator, **Mazhur Ercan**, has ties to many of the bazaars around the city, and regularly uses them for information-gathering purposes. Mostly interested in any magical artifacts that come through Constantinople, the team regularly purchases information from known brokers and will even buy out contracts of other teams working on similar goals. This team is known to be magic-heavy. They have two full magicians and two physical adepts, along with a big nasty Greek troll named Stelios Kartokomous who is stuffed with the best cyberware his sponsorship could afford.

The Talons have made several runs at the rival corporations in the city, most notably the Ares installation and ZIC. They seem to keep clear of jobs that deal in politics, but that makes sense if they are working for the big dragon in Germany. It's not their MO to have a big open shootout. They tend to manipulate their competition into helping out. They have a large allowance for just that. They won't shy away from a fight and have left more than one opposing unit dead in an alleyway.

- Most recently, the Dragon's Talons have acquired several artifacts smuggled out of Ukraine that appear to be dwarf-made in origin but predate the Awakening by several thousand years. The goods made it into the Grand Bazaar but were taken out of circulation early on by another

team with ties to the Draco Foundation. Evidently, the ties weren't strong enough. Money does indeed talk.

- Icarus

- Or enormous great-form spirits. Different language, same results.
- Haze

- How do they know they were of dwarf origins? Low ceilings in the ruins? Short chairs? Depictions on pottery of tiny men with huge beards?
- Slamm-0!

DAMOKLES

(PROFESSIONAL RATING: 4)

Membership: 5
Specialty: Data and Object Retrieval, Extraction

Damokles is a pro-level shadowrunner team out of Constantinople, and has pulled off runs for the past ten years. In all that time, they have only failed at one run, and even that was early on. They can crack any installation, corporate or otherwise, and get away with the prize before the owner knows what hit him. At least, that's their claim. Unlike most teams operating in the city, they use a merchant in the Grand Bazaar, **Nod Fareed El-Hasham**, as their primary means of contact. To hire their services, all one must do is go by Nod's stall and ask to see the special rugs in the back. In front, he is all smiles. Back in negotiations, he can be a real pit bull.

- This Nod guy is a grade-A scumbag. Once you ask for the rugs, he guides you to his office, which is all black carpet and purple neon. He drops his friendly merchant façade and starts negotiating on the spot. He makes no attempt to sugarcoat what you may be requesting, laying it out in its most brutal terms. He then tells you

there will be an additional charge for each person killed on the run like he's counting heads of lettuce. Guy just gives me the chills.
- 2XL

Damokles has no official face besides Nod. They are known to employ magic as well as technological camouflage to get the job done. Each one of their members is trained in B&E, and all of their members are human, in order to blend in better with crowds. They are led by an Arabic phys-ad named **Samara Kaddouri**, who seems to never completely touch the ground wherever she goes. Kaddouri is cold as ice, though, and will have no qualms with gutting someone for a paycheck.

- To be active for so many years and still be successful usually means one of two things. One, they are awful with money and tend to squander it on bulldrek, so they have to keep working to keep the lights on. Two, they actually enjoy the work. I'm guessing since this team is pretty successful that it leans more towards the latter, and that makes them exceptionally dangerous.
- Black Mamba

BOSPHORUS BLING

(PROFESSIONAL RATING: 3)

Membership: 5

Specialty: Firefights, Big Scores

These guys are a street gang that got lucky. Recently they pulled in a huge score from knocking over a Vory shipment of arms coming in from Ukraine. Everyone who sent them on this run expected them to die, but somehow they didn't. Now, they are out on the streets looking for more work, and feeling big. **Aziz Bayraktar** was a ganger on the north side in Beyoglu until he and his crew were offered a job that seemed to good to be true: An unarmed freighter would be coming into the straits soon, and he and his gang were needed to commandeer it. Apparently the job was a setup from the beginning, in order to let the Vory know that this shipment was watched. It certainly wasn't unarmed, but when Bayraktar and his crew piloted their little raft up to the side of the ship, no one took them seriously. A few lucky shots later, and they were on the way to collect. Unfortunately for them, no one in Bayraktar's crew knew how to steer a freighter, and it plowed into the eastern bank north of the city. News cameras showed the team cheering and flashing gang signs before disembarking.

Ever since their big score, "Bosphorus Bling" has been in search of a Mr. Johnson who can get them hooked up into the biz. They were able to keep anything they found on the boat, as was in their contract, and have come into a few high-tech weapons that have no business being in a ganger's hands. Still, if you're looking for some flashy muscle, Bosphorus Bling may be just right for you.

CONSTANTINOPLE HISTORY

It is funny that the names Constantinople and Istanbul have been fought over for generations when the city was actually founded as Lygos almost three thousand years ago. And there is evidence of inhabitation that goes back even further. Even in those days, the strategic importance of its location was part of its rise to prominence. Located on the Bosphorus—which means "bull track" and is the only natural waterway between the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea—the land has been in use ever since humanity gained the knowledge of how to build ships. It also provided a natural crossing for anyone not wanting to go around the Black Sea to enter Europe from the east. Since most routes that traversed the sea had to deal with Russian winters, the Bosphorus became a natural entry point into Europe. Every time a Middle Eastern warlord wanted to take on Europe, the Bosphorus was the place to go.

Over time, the early city grew from a fishing settlement to a Greek city-state, officially taking the name Byzantium. Well, maybe not so much taking the name as having it forced upon them by a king who happened to be named Byzos. Other than being a relatively peaceful settlement, there wasn't much of note until the Roman Era, when in the late second century CE, the city chose the wrong emperor to back, and was subsequently sacked by the victor in the year 196. The victorious emperor, Septimus Severus, was not without strategic thought, and he had the city rebuilt during his reign. A couple hundred years later, in 324, the city was officially re-established after Constantine the Great crushed his imperial rival at the Battle of Chrysopolis. It is said that he went out into a remote area of Turkey, stuck a spear in the ground, and drew an outline of a city. His officials were amazed by the extent to which he intended to build the city. He is reported to have said "I will go as far until he who leads me stops." The city was renamed in Constantine's honor, as he claimed to have a dream about the city's location as the site of his victory. Within six years, Constantine ordered the capitol of the Roman Empire moved to the city on the Bosphorus.

- Funny. I think that's how big the sprawl is today.
- Elijah

- Constantine's legacy finally fulfilled, eh? No wonder the place has a mystic vibe.
- Ethernaut

- I get the feeling that "he who led him" is still around.
- Ma'Fan

Under the guidance of the Romans, Constantinople became one of the greatest cities of antiquity. Not only was its population one of the largest in the world, it also was the home of some of the great advances of the era. The largest aqueduct of the ancient world, now the world's largest water slide, one hundred fifty subterranean cisterns towering underground with their gridded pillars and high arches. The largest cistern, Basilica, is sixty-five yards wide, one hundred thirty-eight yards long, three hundred thirty-six columns, supporting its nine-meter-tall ceilings, could hold enough water for twenty-five Olympic-sized swimming pools. The Code of Justinian, or *Corpus Jurus Civilis*, is considered one of the bases of Western law and was developed in Constantinople. Unfortunately for us, this interpretation of ancient Roman law gave us some of the earliest legal forms of those corporations we all know and love today. It was also home to many forms of advanced architecture of its day. Buildings finished in the sixth century still stand today, despite earthquakes and other attempts to bring them down. Speaking of bringing things down, the Byzantines are credited with coming up with the first counterweight trebuchets as an effective alternative to the catapult. These siege engines could propel solid shot or explosives straight into enemy walls or over the top of them with ease.

During this era, Constantinople established itself as a military power in the region. Owing its success to some legendary generalship under Flavius Belisarius, along with its distinctive heavy calvary, the cataphract, the Byzantine Empire sprawled eastward, driving the Sassanid Persians back to their capital and demanding tribute.

The city itself became a bastion of Christianity on the frontiers of the then-fledgling religion. Christians today hold that ancient city as a pillar of their now-broad expanse. Peoples from all over the Middle East, Asia, Europe, and Northern Africa would intermingle in the city, as it was truly the Crossroads of the World (as it came to be known). Constantinople served as the western end of the famous Silk Road, being an offloading point for goods coming from the Far East and a staging point for those looking to brave the treacherous passage into China. As such, all manner of things could be found there, a fact that persists to this day, though the type of goods has changed greatly.

- For being a Christian, Constantine was sure an interesting gentleman. He killed his son, step-son, and second wife on one trip to Italy. A fit of pique, I suppose.
- Winterhawk

- I've visited an underground bath house in town, and I heard a runner team ran into all three of their spirits in an ancient sewer line on the south side. Whether they are actual ghosts, imitative spirits, a planned deceit, or something else is part of the larger mystery of spirits.
- Axis Mundi

The city's Theodosian walls were famous at repelling invaders from the land, withstanding over fifteen attempts to siege the city from the west. The city's access to the sea could not be blocked, allowing for the passage of food, goods, and weapons during the night. Theodosian II was a kid when the walls were built, but they named the walls after him anyway. They used limestone mortar to help withstand the periodic earthquake. That's what you get when you build a city on a fault line. The walls stand twelve meters tall, six meters thick, with ninety-six towers as large as twenty meters high. They had a triple line of defense before you even got to the inner wall: a moat, a terrace, and an outer wall. Attila the Hun crested a hill with his giant army and decided a good beer back home was better. Only massive numbers were able to overwhelm them, and they were finally breached when the age of gunpowder gave way to cannons large enough to tear them down, over a thousand years after their construction.

The walls could not protect the city from the east, though, as foes would often attempt to attack the city by sea. This would prove to be problematic for the attackers, however, because Constantinople had discovered the use of Greek fire. Further, they had a means to project this Greek fire to other ships. Yes, Constantinople was the first place to discover and use actual fragging flamethrowers.

- Wait, so you're telling me these crusty old medieval guys came up with a flamethrower? Maybe I should start paying more attention to those history documentaries I keep recording over.
- Slamm-0!

- They didn't just invent it. Scholars today still argue over just what was in Greek fire. The formula for producing it was a closely guarded state secret, and no known records remain. What we do know are the reports of it burning on the ocean and even underwater. It was certainly feared enough that there are ancient mosaics and tapestries depicting it.
- Elijah

- I understand the real defense was a giant chain. It was five hundred meters long, with seven hundred fifty links measuring two-thirds of a meter apiece. It floated on wooden logs, and the navy could drag it across the Golden Horn, cutting off the harbor.
- Winterhawk

- Nerd.
- Slamm-0!

The city's defense made it rich with money flowing in from Europe and Asia. Justinian I ruled the empire during the golden age. He's famous for, among other things, promoting his wife, a burlesque dancer, to the position of co-emperor. Theodora and Justinian would rule as joint emperors. Justinian's "justice" was to stamp out pagan celebrations, study of Athenian philosophy, gambling, prostitution, adultery, homosexuality, the Jews, and any Christian that didn't see things his way. His taxes were so popular that the people took out their aggression in the Hippodrome. It was built on vaulted substructures four stories tall. The arches created a gallery full of shops and cafés. Above this, two tiers of columns and thirty stone rows rounded the sand-covered racing track. Bets were placed agains the teams—Blues, Greens, Reds, and Whites—that were more like political factions within the city. Today, gangs still take up these colors as they vie for power in the shadows. One day, Justinian's people decided enough was enough, and the Blues and Greens stormed the Hippodrome. A week later, a third of the city was laid to ashes. Justinian, from Theodora's whispers, took the army, closed the gates to the Hippodrome, and slaughtered everyone inside.

- That explains the types of reagents I find near those ruins.
- Ma'Fan

Justinian rebuilt the capital and centered it on the Church of Holy Wisdom, otherwise known as the Hagia Sophia. The dome at Hagia Sophia is 31 meters across. It mastered the architectonical technique of the pendentive. Four massive arches in a square are connected by pendentives, rounded triangles that connect dome's circular base to the arches. Smaller semi-domes connect to two of the arches opposite each other. The main dome, about fifty-five meters high, appears to hover in mid air. The columns are adorned with symbols of the emperor and empress.

- I have good sources that tell me the True Cross and John the Baptist's head are in a room deep underneath the Hagia Sophia.
- Icarus

- Is this the same source that told you Santa Claus was real when you were a little kid?
- Cosmo

Byzantium would survive attacks from the Visigoths, Persians, Avars, and Arabs, and it weathered a crazy period called Iconoclasm where residents smashed most of their art. The empire would shrink until Basal, in the 1000s CE, came out with the trebuchet and took over the Balkans. He blinded the Bulgarian army, leaving one hundred with one eye so they could go back home to their leader. Because that's what you do when you've been seeking revenge since you were eighteen years old.

The dominance of Constantinople would carry on for another eleven hundred years as the seat of the Eastern Roman Empire, but a new force was rising in

the east. The Ottoman Empire, determined to expand their borders westward, would lay siege to the city one last time, and in 1453, they lobbed enough cannon fire at the famous walls that they finally collapsed, and the Ottoman Empire took the city. Churches were sacked and replaced by mosques. Minarets soon rose to compete with the tallest buildings. Yet the core of the city as a crossroads of civilization did not change. Even years after the initial Ottoman occupation, Constantinople served as the capitol of the empire, and its population boomed again. Under the guidance of the Ottomans, Constantinople became a cultural center between Africa, Europe, and Asia as the Empire occupied land in all three.

The Ottoman rule continued for the next four-hundred-odd years, watching as the rising European powers began to outpace Constantinople culturally. The rest of Europe began to regard the Ottomans as somewhat behind the times. They were an empire whose sun had set a century before, and the decline had been apparent ever since. By the time World War I was over, Constantinople was occupied by armies of various foreign nations, and the empire was partitioned out to the occupying nations. The occupation brought on a resurgence of Turkish Nationalists, who brought about another war, this time for independence, and in 1923, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk became the first president of Turkey.

It was around this time that the use of Constantinople became rarer and the more modern "Istanbul" became the common name for the city on the Bosphorus. During this era, things become more westernized and friendly to Europe at large. These policies pushed the more radical Islamist groups further away from government, with the military taking a large part in politics.

Turkey applied for membership to the European Union in 1999, as it had been part of the European Economic Community since 1987. Ultimately, the decision to accept Turkey into the EU would be denied in 2009. More government reforms were in the works when in 2011, magic decided to let itself be known.

The Awakening hit Istanbul in particular very hard. Already struggling to find common ground between the cultures of the east and west, the emergence of magic and metahumanity sent its precarious position into a tailspin. Elements of radical regimes, quiet since the early twentieth century, began creeping back into government positions. As the military withdrew more and more from government proceedings, their places were filled by various nationalist and religious extremists. The fear caused by magic returning fueled the fervor of these groups, and soon even more were placed in positions of power. The extremists grew in authority and influence, but maintained a relative status quo for some time.

When the Crash hit in '29, the Islamic extremists were finally able to leverage their fear-mongering into a presidency. The backlash against the westernization of Turkey seemed to hit especially hard as people reeled from VITAS, Goblinization, and the beginnings of the Euro Wars. Fear was thick in the streets as what seemed to be the end of the world was unfolding right in front of their eyes.

- The Crash of '29 hit Istanbul like a sledgehammer. People were already paranoid, so it wasn't hard to convince the masses that they were being punished by a vengeful god. Many metahumans died all over the world during those days, and in Istanbul, the chaos was led by those who felt the city had it coming.
- Fianchetto

- What about the Night of Rage? Didn't Istanbul get affected by that as well? I mean, the whole world had metahuman hate boiling out of its ears by then.
- Haze

- Sure, but in Istanbul, they had a fundamentalist government telling everyone that that three-meter-tall guy with the horns was a demon sent from hell, instead of Abdul the falafel cart guy. You have to remember, this was ten years before it happened in the States. By the time of the Night of Rage, metahuman persecution in Istanbul was a regular thing. Seeing it carried out on television by an angry mob in the United States only served to fuel the fire.
- Fianchetto

Still reeling from the Crash, heads of state from all over the Middle East met in Damascus at the United Islamic Conference. The purpose of the conference was to meet to "liberate" the Muslims living under the rule of other religions, who they deemed "infidels." During this conference, a radical mullah, Sayid Jazrir, called for an "Alliance for Allah," banding together the more fundamentalist countries in the Middle East. After Jordan and Kuwait withdrew their support in favor of the less extreme Federation of Islamic States, it seemed the Alliance for Allah would fizzle out. Unfortunately for the new Federation, internal pressure caused it to collapse within three years.

While the Alliance for Allah was forming, the Euro Wars were raging in the north. By the time the Nightwraiths dropped their bombs, the Alliance for Allah was looking at the weakened state of the continent like a vulture circling a carcass. The next year had them launching their great Ottoman Jihad against Russia, Israel, the Balkans, and elsewhere in Europe as the continent struggled to recover from its war efforts.

- Great Ottoman Jihad? How come I've never heard of it? Mustn't have been very great.
- 2XL

- That's because it's also known as Euro Wars 2: This Time It's Personal.
- Dr. Spin

- To them, it was very personal. Jazrir saw it as a chance to finally be taken seriously on the world stage, and he took it. Too bad it cost thousands of lives.
- Goat Foot

In 2036, while touring Istanbul, Mulla Sayid Jazrir was assassinated. Seeing as how Jazrir was the proverbial glue holding the Alliance for Allah together, the Jihad collapsed as the organization struggled to right the ship. By this time, though, the Western Turks decided they'd had enough of fundamentalist ways, and Turkey plunged into civil war. On one side were the westernized Turks, who wanted to live a more secular and cosmopolitan way of life, and on the other were the fundamentalist Islamists, determined to hold on to their claim. The country tore itself apart as fighting raged on both sides of the Bosphorus. Istanbul found itself caught in the crossfire more than once. In 2042, Istanbul took its chance and declared itself independent from Turkey altogether. Its claim was immediately recognized by Ukraine, who moved in warships from the Black Sea to support it. Officially changing its name back to Constantinople in order to stand out from the regimes of the past hundred years, the city finally was free.

That kind of freedom comes at a cost, though—being a free city means there is no one there to protect it from threats, inside or out. A new government was established, a council involving all of the districts. Unfortunately getting them to agree on something is like pulling teeth. The minutiae of running a city spread among many hands and passed from one portion of government to the next, and has created an enormous bureaucracy that moves only at a glacial pace. Seeing their opportunity, the corps wasted no time either. Saeder-Krupp designated the newly-free Constantinople its Middle East Headquarters, while others sought to undermine its claim.

As for external threats, Ukraine also set its sights on Constantinople. Having endorsed its new freedom with its warships, Kiev made overtures of annexation. This would have given Ukraine de facto control of the entirety of the Black Sea, but this was quickly defeated in the council.

Establishment of a police force was also necessary. Many corporate interests vied for a contract in the city, but in the end, the council ended up funding a homegrown force, known locally as simply the "Polis."

The fledgling city-state was quickly put to the test in 2045 when a major earthquake hit the city, demolishing several landmarks that have stood for over a thousand years. Others were simply damaged. Several hundred people lost their lives in the aftermath of the earthquake, as the council bickered about whose responsibility it was to clean up the damage and where to assign emergency responders.

From the beginning, not everyone had agreed with the decision to become a free city. Even though the Turkish civil war was still raging, Constantinople was a haven of sorts for all types. Fundamentalists still existed, though most lived on the eastern shore of the strait. Terror bombings became commonplace, and even the occasional rocket strike reminded citizens that outside their free city, there was still a war going on. To answer these problems, the council looked to the 10,000 Daggers mercenary outfit. Normally an organization oriented toward intelligence gathering and surgical strike operations, 10,000 Daggers took the job of supporting the Polis. In this they proved to be effective, but the sheer number of terrorist or fundamentalist groups within the city prevented them from stopping the problem overall.

- There is some speculation that the 10,000 Daggers let some of these attacks continue to happen in order to keep their contract renewed, allowing them to demand ever-higher hazard pay.
- Icarus

- That's drek, man. The 10,000 Daggers are headquartered in Istanbul. Letting this kind of thing happen in your own backyard is kind of like crapping where you eat. This outfit is far more professional than that.
- Hard Exit

Attacks or no, life went on in Constantinople, until things took a turn for the worse in 2056. A rash of kidnappings had plagued the city the previous year and into the spring. The people who were disappearing were not individuals anyone would miss: a burned-out druggie here, a thieving street kid there. Most of the reports were swiftly filed away in the Polis systems as the already-overburdened force did its best to cope with terror cells and smuggling rings bringing illegal arms and equipment into the city. In June of that year, the daughter of one of the ruling council went missing. After a city-wide hunt that lasted a full week, the horrifying truth was discovered: An extensive termite spirit hive was growing under the city on the eastern side of the strait.

Fearing another incident like what happened in Chicago, Ares moved quickly, hiring on a large unit of Kurdish mercenaries to take out the hive. In July, they stormed the place, complete with magical backup and plenty of flamethrowers. Luckily for them, the bugs hadn't spread too far from their hive at that point, and the city breathed a collective sigh of relief when Ares declared the hive scoured and bug-free. Despite the declaration, the citizens on the Asian side accused the Polis and council of turning a blind eye to the problems in letting it get as bad as it was. This only served to heighten tensions again between the council and the eastern shore.

- So how come they nuked Chicago, and only went into this hive with a bunch of military forces? Couldn't they have done that in the UCAS? Why in the hell would you want to blow a nuke in one of the largest cities in the Western Hemisphere when you can go in with twenty good men and take them all out?
- Kia

- Chicago was a different story altogether. There, they had multiple varieties of bug spirits all working together in a massive hive comprising several smaller ones. Even bugs that are normally solitary were working with the big hives in Chicago. Everyone is terrified of another Universal Brotherhood, so waiting to take out a hive once it's found is considered crazy. It's also the reason why the 10,000 Daggers weren't involved in the operation. Ares didn't want to wait for the Daggers to consolidate their forces, and they went in with who they could hire on short notice. Glad they did. It would be a shame to blow up a city like this.
- Dr. Spin

With the destruction of the bug hive, things returned to a relative status-quo in Istanbul, though attacks from the eastern bank increased. 10,000 Daggers dedicated a peacekeeping force to trying to ferret out some of these extremist cells, but though the attacks slowed, they did not cease entirely. Much of this was caused by insurgents from the southwestern Turkish provinces with the aim of forcing Istanbul to side with Ankara and go back into the fold. To the average citizen in Istanbul, it was more misery with car bombs and mortar strikes coming from the eastern bank.

The last straw with the council was reached in 2067 when the Bosphorus Bridge was demolished in a large-scale attack. No fewer than fifteen separate groups claimed responsibility for the feat, most centered in the east bank district of Uskudar. With a majority vote, Uskudar's political power was suspended on the council, leaving the fate of Istanbul largely in the hands of those in favor of westernization.

The '60s in Istanbul were a strange time for everyone. It seemed that the city was still trying to find its cultural identity in the Sixth World, despite clinging to the traditions of times long past. One of the more curious things to come out of this was the popularity of Orkxploitation media. Neil the Ork Barbarian caught on like wildfire in eastern Europe, and Istanbul was no exception. Media in this part of the world generally runs about five to ten years behind trendsetters like Los Angeles or London. Still, globalization and Matrix access has made it easier to get your hands on things, so it ends up being a strange mix of new and old.

The recent Orkish Pride movements in the West and "rediscovery" of ork culture has fueled this fire like gasoline, and even today, it is common to see Neil the Ork Barbarian t-shirts and knock-off action figures in the bazaars. Tourists can even get their hands on ultra-low-budget unlicensed versions of these movies, often filmed at some of the more famous ruins for that authentic feel. During the summer months it is even common to catch some of them filming, though the fly-by-night film crews are often chased off by security. A few of them have become successful enough to rent locations out for a day or two. Gladiator melodramas and action flicks are the most popular, followed by old-fashioned beat-'em-ups. Oftentimes the hero has supernatural powers or simply uncanny timing, and curiously enough, they will often break into song, reminiscent of the old Bollywood flat-vids from the turn of the century. These pictures are sometimes filmed entirely in Or'Zet to increase their authenticity as well. Currently the big hit is *Slave Pits of Topkapi*, where the hero must liberate his friends and comrades from the evil clutches of a corrupt government.

- Oh come on. Way to set things back a hundred fifty years.
- Bull

- Turkish gladiator movies starring musclebound orkish men singing and dancing in furry loincloths? Count me in.
- Netcat

During this time, the Matrix system in Istanbul was completely redesigned by Aksakal Teks. The resulting grid, often called Byz-Net, is extremely well-designed, and other corporations pay a decent-sized chunk of change to use it. Aksakal Teks rose to the top of the Istanbul communications world quickly because of their Matrix tech, but they still lived in the shadow of the bigger corps in town.

In the early 2070s, the war between East and West in Turkey ground to a halt. Both sides, exhausted at fighting the other, declared an uneasy truce. Immediately, ambassadors were sent from Ankara and the Neo-Ataturks to Istanbul to welcome it back into Turkey, but the council again refused, keeping the city free. Not long after these overtures, the New European Economic Community increased its presence in both the Sea of Marmara and the Black Sea, with backup from Ukrainian warships, making it clear that Istanbul wasn't going to belong to any one nation again soon.

Not all things last forever, though, and contracts inevitably run their course. For whatever reason, 10,000 Daggers decided not to renew their contract with the council in Istanbul, instead taking another contract further to the west in the Balkans, which has always been a hotspot for mercenary activities. This left a void in the policing of the city. All too ready to step into that void were the Grey Wolves, a Turkish nationalist unit with ties to some unsavory business in Russia and central Asia. Much more of a standard military unit, the Grey Wolves took to the streets with force. 10,000 Daggers had plenty of run-ins with the Grey Wolves over the years, most

of them violent, and the hate runs deep on both sides. Despite this, the Grey Wolves and 10,000 Daggers have worked out an uneasy truce, deciding it would be better not to cross each other's paths.

Prior to being called upon to assist with the city's law enforcement, the Grey Wolves had a checkered past. And they really aren't any cleaner now—just more organized. With connections to the Italian Mafia as well as other organized crime syndicates in central Asia, the Wolves have been adept at maneuvering around the law in Istanbul for many years. Formerly a series of individual cells, the group has been unified to take on the task of working with the Polis. Many saw the departure of the 10,000 Daggers as the city council giving in to pressures from both sides of the Bosphorus to bring in a more Asian-centric force with a bigger interest in the city as a whole. They didn't think they would be getting a group of head-breakers like the Wolves, though.

- I can only really say two things about the Grey Wolves being part of law enforcement: Hope whatever happens to you is out in public, and that you are an ethnic Turk. These people only really care about their cause, and if you aren't one of them, it's easy for them to let whatever happened get swept under the rug.
- Goat Foot

- Just because 10,000 Daggers no longer hold the law enforcement contract with the ruling council, it doesn't mean they have abandoned the city. They keep a close eye on the Grey Wolves and are ready to go after them should they become a problem. Word has it that 10,000 Daggers are kept on a sort of retainer by the council, in case the Grey Wolves get uppity.
- Icarus

Most recently, Istanbul has seen an upturn in the trade of telesma and magical artifacts. The age of the city means there is plenty to be found in the vaults below, and there are many who would pay well to get their hands on some of these items. The Draco Foundation maintains an office in Seraglio and often works with the New Islamic University in Beyoglu to catalog and store some of these items. Calligraphic scrolls and other designs are the major items being made by the local talismongers, using reagents from some of the ancient places within the city.

- If you're going hunting for materials in these areas, be aware that security doesn't like it if you show up and pocket a piece of some three-millennia-old ancient ruin to power your Orgy spell. Most places like this are under some pretty heavy surveillance. Go at night and wear a ski mask.
- 2XL

Of course, just because the city has had relative peace for the past few years doesn't mean it won't decide to eat its own face next week. The tensions between the east and west are still very high in the city, and the balance just needs to tip slightly one way or another before a ferry crossing the strait is bombed because one side wants to make a statement.

- Someone is definitely actively going after the corps in the city. All the AAAs have been hit recently by break-ins. Who knows what they had taken from them or what data they were hiding that's now on the market? None of the local corporations have been hit, though—just the big boys.
- Icarus

HOW TO GET AROUND

BY AIR

The main airport of Constantinople is Atatürk Airport in the Western Suburbs. Security is pretty tight around Atatürk, as the airport is still used as a refueling station for NEEC aircraft as well as occasional civilian transportation. It has seen better days. A fresh coat of paint doesn't quite hide the bullet holes, and the runway is a pattern of patchwork asphalt. Two terminals have been designated for domestic and international flights, while a third terminal is operated by 10,000 Daggers. This third terminal is on the far east end, separated by several walls and fencing, making it a challenge to move between the terminals without leaving the airport.

- The Kilif, as the terminal is called, charges high landing fees for independent flights into Constantinople. It's one of the assets 10,000 Daggers have held onto both for their own mobility and as a source of income. Mercenary groups, crime syndicates, and the occasional shadowrun team charter flights land at Kilif, as there are no weapon or background checks. If 10,000 Daggers is transporting RPGs, a runner wanted by Lone Star carrying an unlicensed handgun isn't as threatening. Just don't do anything to piss them off.
- Picador

- Sabiha Gökçen Airport on the Asian side is available, but you have to go through the Yuxa clan for permission to land. They don't like uninvited guests.
- Goat Foot

BY LAND

While many of the freeways and bridges have been opened or repaired once more, there are still occasional skirmishes, mostly in the Asian suburbs. More often, the population is relieved that they can take the tram and save a little nuyen for food rather than cram themselves on an expensive ferry to get themselves to work. Second only to the Big Constantinople Tunnel (BCT) is powering up the electric trams that were suspended for so long. The electric tram connects dozens of stations around Constantinople, including across the Bosporus. Security is typical on the electric trams with Polis patrols.

- Many of the Asian stations were scavenged for everything from copper and steel to fiber optics. What wasn't taken most likely was bombed by the Ukrainian ships. It was suggested to the council that the rails were being used by terrorists for mobile rocket platforms. Rather than invest in sending 10,000 Daggers to secure the locations, it was decided precise targeting was cheaper.
- Picador

AVRASYA TUNNEL

While many of the bridges were damaged between the European and Asian sides of Constantinople and people travelled on ferries, the Avrasya tunnel stood dormant with UN forces at each end. For a time, the eight lanes housed military vehicles and ordnance. While the Ayrasya tunnel is now open to civilian traffic, there is a lingering rumor of a secret base being built adjacent to it.

MARMARAY RAIL

From Halkali on the European side to Gebeze on the Asian side, the 1.3-kilometer Marmaray tunnel for the Metro Rail allows fast travel. The BCT and Marmaray tunnels have been the focal point for the repairs to the Asian suburbs. It's been slow, but it beats taking the boat all the time. Now that there's no security, people have found their way into the tunnels finding the steam vents much warmer in the winter.

IRON SILK ROAD

The Iron Silk road connects Europe to Asia with a railway. The massive connection of cities to steel is like a great nerve across several continents. It stretches from London, branching through Europe, down to Constantinople, further south to skirt the Middle East, then East, across India, before ending in the Canton Confederation.

- Travel from Paris to Constantinople on the high-class SNCF Orient Express! The maglev is a ten-hour nonstop ride to Constantinople at half the cost of a flight. Now that the BCT is open, ESUS is planning to operate corporate tours farther east.
- Traveler Jones

At the critical point in this infrastructure is the city of Constantinople itself and the seventeen-meter-diameter tunnel crossing the Bosphorus. The tunnel is called the Big Constantinople Tunnel, or BCT. It was completed in late 2028, with three stories to alleviate congestion for cars and trams, serving as a new connection between both sides of Constantinople. Even with the war, corporations defended the critical path as armored trains rushed through Constantinople. Until recently, no cars or trams were allowed to use the BCT, for fear of it getting destroyed.

With the Bosphorus suspension bridge demolished and people having to take the ferry, the BCT was a welcomed relief for the wageslaves. Much of the city, even the country's infrastructure was built to drive traffic through the BCT, Marmaray, and Avrasya.

- It's not surprising that corporations worked hard to keep Constantinople out of the hands of any extremists. It's probably also the corporations that convinced the city to become independent in the first place.
- Plan 9

SUBTERRANEAN SECRETS

Beneath Constantinople is a labyrinth of tunnels, from the cisterns and aqueduct that supplied the water to the city to the secret tunnels beneath Sultanahmet square. These tunnels allow shadowrunners and others to traverse Constantinople with little worry of law enforcement. The Basilica Cistern is the only publicly accessible space under Constantinople. It's 138 meters long by 64 meters wide, and the roof is supported by over three hundred columns that are nine meters tall. It's quite beautiful, with recycled columns from older temples. In the shadows, away from the echoing path of the tourists, are tunnels that provide water to the fish within the cistern. These tunnels go off for several hundred meters connecting to obsolete aqueducts or other cisterns.

- Passages even run under Hagia Sophia. Security on the surface prevents a lot of investigation, but legend has that the tunnels stretched even to Prince Islands, large enough for ships to float down. The reality so far is the known connection to Topkapi palace.
- Fianchetto

- The Ministry of Culture already knows about the tunnels. Many have been resealed and reinforced with concrete. Look at the war—did you see any terrorists come into the city via the tunnels or pull a Guy Fawkes? No, and the reason is that there's more dangerous things down there that the Ministry doesn't want people to see.
- Plan 9

- Terrorists didn't take out any of the tunnels because they were shut down early or had hefty corporate security.
- Picador

The war encouraged people to find shelter, and many of the hundred or so cisterns became makeshift bunkers. As the war progressed, water was diverted so that the tunnels could be used to smuggle goods and contraband into a city fighting for independence. Custom delivery drones ride the twenty kilometers of aqueducts from the Black Sea, over and under the urban landscape, to reach their destination.

- The twenty clicks is just the aqueduct from the Black Sea to Basilica Cistern by way of Valens aqueduct. Try 100+ if you include locations like the Belgrade Forest to Taksim Square waterway, Terkoz Lake delivery, and the Maglova aqueduct from Alibeyköy.
- Traveler Jones

The maze of tunnels hasn't been fully mapped by any one organization. The most complete collection belongs to the Constantinople Cultural Center, but that one is off-limits to the public. The maze itself is the result of several hundred years of work first started by Romans, lost, rediscovered, or rebuilt over the centuries. Occasionally people and drones get lost down there spelunking. Among the labyrinth of tunnels and waterways under Constantinople are hundreds of cisterns. The second-largest after the Basilica is **Binbirdirek,** also called the Cistern of Philoxenos and the Cistern of the 1,0001 Columns (although, techinically, it only has 224). Situated beneath the ruins of the Palace of Antiochus, Binbirdirek was open to the public for a while, then forgotten over time, save for a few criminal elements. It has been upgraded with modern conveniences, if you don't mind the dampness or the shallow lake below the walkways. The **Blue Diamond Cistern**, accessible via a spiral staircase in the back of a carpet shop in the Bosphorus section, has been modified with fiber-optic cables drilled up to the surface and along the building to collect sunlight. The blue algae walls compete with the green of hyrdroponic farming within the cistern. The most dangerous tunnels found have been the Constantine tunnels. These date back to Roman days and were intended to allow the Emperor to move around the city secretly. Large tunnels, wide enough for a chariot to pass through, cross the Western Suburbs, through Sultanahmet and the Hippodrome, traveling under the Golden Horn to end in the Bosphorus. These catacombs have a few side passages and chambers where waterlogged refuse has been deposited. As the refuse decomposes, toxic gases have built up to levels where travelers would require rebreathers or risk suffocation. Combustion engines or anything that can generate a spark is equally risky down here, as they may cause an explosion. Water levels vary from a few centimeters to 1.5 meters in depth.

- While dangerous, not many would risk pursuit at the first sign of a bad air pocket. Crazy riggers making a fast delivery, on the other hand, take it as a minor inconvenience.
- TurboBunny

BY SEA

Constantinople sprawls between the Marmara Sea in the south and the Black SEa to the north, and it's split by the Bosphorus strait. With all that water, there are a hundred ports and docks for ships to anchor at, not to mention beaches for those who just need to drop off or pick up stuff without having to deal with the legalities. There are still patrol boats from the Ukraine and NEEC watching out for any threats. Maiden's Tower is also still active, checking for any submersibles or small watercrafts crossing the strait. For civilians, there are two kinds of ferries that cruise around the waterways of Constantinople. The first are the catamaran sea-buses that cruise quickly between a dozen stations. These cater more to the high-lifestyle traveler, with stops mainly from Old Town to Princes' Islands. The second are the slower ferryboats that were designed to carry passengers and vehicles. They travel to twenty places on both sides of the strait. When transportation across the bridges and tunnels was banned, the price of ferry tickets skyrocketed. The seabuses excluded the lower class as a precaution against attacks. The ferryboats became crowded haulers, ditching transporting cars for more wageslaves. It was an uncomfortable way to travel.

- Not to mention the ferryboats being detained and searched on a daily basis made going to work difficult at best. Who knows how many people died and/or fell off the boat.
- Traveler Jones

SECURITY

From the Western Suburbs to the Bosphorus neighborhoods of Constantinople, law enforcement is being handled by the Constantinople Free City Police, or "Polis" to everyone. This organization was derived from the Turkish national police, so they wear the same navy-blue uniforms. Most were just transitions when Constantinople became independent and followed the same rules and handled the same districts. Unfortunately, governance by the council makes progress and improvements of the police force virtually impossible. For years the Polis were bogged down in a patchwork of policies and less-than-ideal funding as the council changed hands and corporations groomed successors for their own needs.

Then came an Ares Macrotech executive, Everet Masterson, who allocated funding to the CFCP as if they were a branch of Knight Errant, but without calling them Knight Errant. He provided both training and equipment for the outmoded police.

- Masterson's generosity is not just for Turkey. He is using Constantinople as a prototype for an agile version of the Knight Errant policing force. He is making the Polis his pawn in competition with others like the Ukraine and Grey Wolves.
- Picador

The CFCP is divided into five units: Maltilar, Yunislar, Sahinler, Hezarfen, and Katip. The Maltilar are the Polis with backpacks containing lightweight electric bikes. This allows a smaller force to cover more ground. The bikes are self-deployable, simple vehicles—most of the usual beat cops have them.

The Yunislar are the always-mobile motorcycle officers. They patrol the narrow streets and freeways around Constantinople. The motorcycles are much more useful than standard KE patrol vehicles. They are also a bit faster than the Maltilar units.

If things go bad, like if some fanatic gets past the Grey Wolves into New City, then the Sahinler Special Motorcycle unit comes into play. Think of them as a SWAT team on an armored Nodachis. These bad boys could take on Grey Wolves if they wanted too—if only they had greater numbers.

- And there you have the problem with council politics. They can be less reliant on mercenaries and syndicates if they think for themselves instead being the mouthpiece for the corps.
- Cosmo

- And lose the financial backing? Not a chance. Besides, fearmongering keeps Grey Wolves in business more than anything.
- Sunshine

- Paper tigers. The Polis have no authorization in corporate zones, in the water, or most of the Asian Suburbs. The Council lined their pockets by those omissions; offering the contracts to Grey Wolves and leaving the corporations autonomous. So in New City or Galata, they are often limited to traffic and parks.
- Picador

- It's biting the corporations in the ass now, with multiple corporate break-ins. The Polis offer the same hospitality that the corp security guards have shown them.
- Ma'Fan

The Hezarfen unit are hotshot riggers and arial drones that patrol the skies of Constantinople and surrounding areas. Some see them as machine-based gargoyles, as the drones cling to buildings to watch people from below. The last of the CFCP units is the Katip, Awakened security. They are from the various Islamic traditions, tasked with making sure that any magical activity is legal in Constantinople.

- While they could crack down on that evil western magic, they've been focused on reagents and telesma that have been illegally taken from the city and surrounding area. Some tourists don't know any better, but when you have a thousand of them doing the same thing, sites have to be cordoned off before the whole place is hauled off.
- Jimmy No

The Grey Wolves have contracted with the council as peacekeepers, emphasizing security in the Asian Suburbs neighborhood. They wear grey-and-white full body armor or urban camo fatigues. They patrol in ATVs and are armed with automatics and the occasional grenade launcher. Like the 10,000 Daggers before them, they use intimidation tactics to keep people in line, and flags with the face of a snarling wolf have kept many gangs at bay. Grey Wolves also are allowed to use lethal force when necessary. Unlike 10,000 Daggers, they have plainclothes personnel to organize the criminal element.

- If any of their partners tries to cheat them, it becomes a police action to take the newly labeled terrorist out.
- Thorn

Most recently, the Council has been recruiting CFCP to districts in the Asian Suburbs as the infrastructure is repaired. CFCP's enforcement of the Asian Suburbs was absent for so long, it's hard for people to adjust to seeing them there. The Polis gives some hope of reunification of Constantinople and another member on the council. Grey Wolves have been reluctant to give up their peacekeeping positions. This is probably what 10,000 Daggers suspected when they left.

- Council has the option to play the 10,000 Daggers Consultation card if the Grey Wolves don't back down to the CFCP. The Grey Wolves will just drag their heels to buy their time in moving any of their operations, maybe throw the CFCP a bone or something to focus on.
- Icarus

POLITICS

Constantinople is controlled by a seven-man council. Each member is elected from one of the districts (Asian Suburbs, Boshporus, Galata, Golden Horn, New City,

SAIED BEY

Metatype: Human
Sex: Male
Age: Old age
Connection Rating: 7
Type: Networking
Preferred payment method: Nuyen
Hobbies/vice: Nothing of interest or use
Personal life: Married with adult children
Background: One of seven members of the ruling council. Saied is the oldest of the members, surviving two assassination attempts and all three coups. He is very much a high-functioning bureaucrat. He can expedite paperwork and permits or vanish records with ease. He's up in years now and walks with a limp, not from old age as he says but from a previous disagreement. Saied Bey's power is tied to the Eurocorps and various government contacts on their payroll. For most of his term, he's been voting against Saeder-Krupp and Councilman Vefza because it amuses him.

EROL ALA

Metatype: Human
Sex: Male
Age: Middle-aged
Connection Rating: 6
Type: Networking
Preferred payment method: Bank transfer
Hobbies/vice: None
Personal life: Married, no children
Background: Erol will be one of the new members of the council for the Western Suburbs. There's no dispute from that district about wanting him on the council. He's been a good civil servant in getting roads maintained and funding the Polis to protect his district. Because of his boring résumé, there have not been any corporations meeting with him. It might also be that the corporations are waiting until he is actually a member so that they can see which way his flag flies. Erol is just happy to keep things running efficiently.

ETHEM SAGLAM

Metatype: Human
Sex: Male
Age: Middle-aged
Connection Rating: 7
Type: Networking
Preferred payment method: Bank transfer
Hobbies/vice: Hollywood trids
Personal life: Single
Background: Ethem is the Bosphorus Council member. He is the most laid-back of all the members, as it's his district that the BCT goes through. He is backed by NEEC, but also by Ukraine, Russia, and other governments as they make sure their cargo is given priority through the BCT. Ethem's goal is to continue to expand the use of the BCT, and he has accomplished much of this. During council meetings, he is more distracted by entertainments found on his commlink and defers to Saied on any decision.

NYAZI TEKIN

Metatype: Elf
Sex: Male
Age: Middle-aged
Connection Rating: 7
Type: Networking
Preferred payment method: Certified credstick
Hobbies/vice: Architecture
Personal life: Live-in companion
Background: Nvazi is the only metahuman on the council and doesn't consider himself a figurehead for metahumanity. Nyazi is an engineer and architect. He wants to get the council to approve renewing the restoration of the Golden Horn, but the corporations (and thus Saied, Vefza, and Ethem) have deferred any funding towards the Golden Horn while the BCT and the tram infrastructure needs work. Infuriated by the council, he will debate and argue with them. He's hoping that he can work Vefza to his side, but needs finances.

VEFZA AKI

Metatype: Human
Sex: Male
Age: Middle-aged
Connection Rating: 6
Type: Networking
Preferred payment method: Bank transfer
Hobbies/vice: Cricket
Personal life: Married with children
Background: Vefza Aki is the youngest member of the current council, at age forty-two. He was also considered the most powerful and influential member when he came on board, as he was backed by Saeder-Krupp and had good relations with 10,000 Daggers. His goal was to promote new construction and tourism in Constantinople. For now, he has been successful with construction of Ejderha and the still-under-construction Folkari Towers, luxury condos

close to the heart of the free city. Unfortunately for him, Saeder-Krupp is ending their ownership of Ejderha and are not spending any more money on the Folkari towers, as they are moving operations. This has left him in search of patronage.

MOHAMMED KHEBI

Metatype: Human
Sex: Male
Age: Middle-aged
Connection Rating: 7
Type: Networking/fixer
Preferred payment method: Certified credstick
Hobbies/vice: Skeet shooting
Personal life: Single
Background: While Mohammed Khebi is a council member for Galata, he is better known as a shadowy business negotiator and fixer in Topkapi. Mohammed is more street smart than most other council members, as he grew up as a trader in the Grand Bazaar. When he wants things done, he doesn't always wait for Council to discuss it with their corporate backers—he'll hire runners to get the job done. This also has helped him collect favors from corporate entities, giving him leverage. It also helps to have Kamil Argubedi as a friend.

CELAL OKYAR

Metatype: Human
Sex: Male
Age: Middle-aged
Connection Rating: 6
Type: Networking
Preferred payment method:
Hobbies/vice: Cram user
Personal life: Single
Background: Celal is the challenger to Vaspin in becoming a district member for the Asian Suburbs. He is ex-military from 10,000 Daggers, and he wants to make changes for Constantinople. His backing however is with the Grey Wolves, so not everyone agrees with his ideas. Before the council chooses a new member, Celal has been working hard to undermine and sabotage Vaspin's chances. The corporations have kept their distance from Celal and Vaspin, waiting to see what the council decides.

VASPIN ERDO

Metatype: Human
Sex: Male
Age: Middle-aged
Connection Rating: 6
Type: Networking
Preferred payment method: Bank transfer
Hobbies/vice: Gambling
Personal life: Live-in partner
Background: Vaspin is the soon-to-be council member for Constantinople to follow Lutfi's removal. He wants to make a change for the Asian Suburbs and get things moving again. He is a businessman with his own chain of Kofe houses, the Sultan Baklava, throughout Turkey. He has seen what Grey Wolves' associates have been doing to neighboring businesses with a protection racket, and he has vowed to stop it. Mohammed has, behind closed doors, allied himself with Vaspin. Because of this, Vaspin has a challenger, and Celal has been getting support for his position by employing the fear the Grey Wolves inspire.

Sultanahmet, and Western Suburbs). When the city first gained independence, the council had trouble managing the city. With ongoing coups that changed the controlling powers, the Asian Suburb member at the time, Lutfi Pamuk, would not implement policy provided by the council. Instead he let the militant faction continue to run free within his district. As a result, with the backing of the Ukraine, NEEC, and Saeder-Krupp, the council banned Lutfi from meetings and officiated martial law on the Asian side of the free city. 10,000 Daggers was then given the contract to police that district.

- Lousy use of mercenaries. Granted they had a stake in what happens here, but we function better in sprints rather than marathons.
- Hard Exit

With the Asian Suburbs banned from the council, the remaining members realized they couldn't have a six-man council, otherwise things could end up in a stalemate. So the Western Suburbs gave in and allowed Saied (from the Sultanahmet district) to be their voice as well. With current affairs and the fact that Lutfi has been ousted by the people from the district, the council will be deciding on the Asian Suburbs' council member by the beginning of next year. And to keep an odd number of members, Saied is relinquishing the Western Suburbs' district to Erol Ala, also happening at the beginning of next year.

Note that there's no term limit for council members, nor is there a specific time for members to change. The council member either chooses to retire or—like Lutfi—is removed from the council. Each district has their own providences/neighborhoods who approve which individual from among them will be their voice on the council.

- The Princes' Islands are basically corporate controlled at this point. They don't even get a voice in the council. What isn't leased/owned by the corporations isn't big enough to matter to the rest of Constantinople.
- Cosmo

Council Members include: Saied Bey for Sultanahmet, Mohammed Khebi for Galata, Ethem Saglam for Bosphorus, Nyazi Tekin for Golden Horn, Vefza Aki for the New City, and soon to include Erol Ala for Western Suburb and Vaspin Erdo for the Asian Suburb.

- Constantinople is controlled by money. That's nothing new, nor is it unique. The seven-man council can make decisions, but they are heavily influenced by the corporations. It makes sense considering the billions of nuyen that could be moving through Constantinople on the BCT.
- Mr. Bonds

NEIGHBORHOODS

While there are many districts within Constantinople, it's easier to group them into 1 of 7 neighborhoods: Western Suburbs, Golden Horn, Sultanahmet (Old City), Galata, New City, Bosphorus, and Asian Suburbs.

ASIAN SUBURBS

The Asian Suburbs is a vast district, covering both the Kadıköy and Üsküdar neighborhoods. While these neighborhoods are mostly commercial, the rest of the district is street upon street of cookie-cutter condos and apartment complexes built a century ago. Most of the workforce of Constantinople (over a third) comes from this district. This side of the Bosphorus strait was the hardest hit during the civil war, as fanatics and terrorists operated cells in the district and the military fired artillery and drone strikes against them. Much of the infrastructure was decimated. Only a few paths remained, such as the BCT and the ferry docks that were heavily guarded by NEEC and corporate forces. For a number of years, the Asian side of the Bosphorus was under martial law, with 10,000 Daggers operating as a peacekeeping force. This put them in multiple conflicts with the Grey Wolves, many ending in bloodshed. With some negotiations with Constantinople's council, many of the fanatics fueling the terrorist cells were silenced. The sounds of gunfire became less frequent. With less worry of another bombing, Constantinople opened up Marmaray and Avarasya to civilians. This was a great relief to those who had to choose between the price of a ferry or food for the family.

Today, refugees have returned, finding much work to do. The Marmaray and BCT were the corporations' highest priorities, as the line connects Europe to Asia. Power was restored around the eight substations for the suburban trains, relieving the surface traffic once again. Those substations have become the nuclei of civilization as residents patch and steal power from the tram. Clean water is similarly siphoned from the functional facilities of the train stations.

AETHERPEDIA

GECEKONDU

Plural gecekondular, the word is Turkish for "quickly built, without permission." This term is equivalent to the barrens in Seattle. It often refers to the quickly built homes for refugees. There's a legal loophole where, if a home is built between dusk and dawn, the Polis can't just knock the home down the next day. They have to go through legal proceedings in order to remove the home. Gecekondu neighborhoods have cropped up all over, including large cities such as Constantinople.

BROOKLYN PARK

Brooklyn Park, where three buildings lean against each other for support, has become a popular place for those who don't want to be found. Mall fronts and offices have become makeshift condos if you don't mind taking the stairs or the tilt. City officials haven't demolished the place yet, as they finance the infrastructure needed for the trains and trolley system. Below Brooklyn park is the Q, or Q bar. They control what little power can be used by Brooklyn Park. You can find a few deckers here working the system to set up a quiet spot for accessing a grid out in the burbs. Some here do a little bartering for deck components or cybernetics. The Q has a nightly rave with homegrown BTLs. Deprivation tanks below the Q serve to heighten the drug or astral experience.

CADDEBOSTAN BEACH

This beach was the site of heated skirmishes with the UN patrols. As a precaution against terrorists attacking ferries with the bridges closed, mines, razor wire, and other deterrents were deployed. Due to the unexploded ordnance, the Caddebostan Beach has since been closed to the public. This includes the remains of some beautiful bays. Small-time smugglers occupy the ruins there with low-draft boats so as to not disturb things within the sand.

- Until somebody coughs up the hazard pay, no one is going to try to clean it up.
- Traveler Jones

DARK VISION

Once called "My World," this was an early arcology prototype some fifty years ago, built with self-sufficiency in mind. For most of the war it was occupied by various warlords and fanatics, until a group of shamans and their followers "cleansed" the neighborhood. Razorwire and concrete blocks surround the faded umbrellas and mangled topiaries. Magical rituals have

spurred growth of vegetation to obscure much of the compound. Wards keep many other things from scouting the place. Locals speak of devil spirits and swimming pools filled with blood.

- Besides looking like another forested park, it's all rumor and slander. The local Awakened have taken matters into their own hands in recovering land. Dark Vision is supposedly an augury of future things. That's presumably why they took the place once Constantinople was declared an independent city.
- Balladeer

- Nothing good can come from this.
- Ecotope

GECEKONDU KADIKÖY

Lumped together here are various dens and dives that cater to many with cheap drugs and BTLs. The stone buildings, some older than even Constantinople, have been secured for business in the shadows. Rubble has been thrown together to form homes between the remaining standing buildings. One of the more popular eateries in Kadikoy is The Black Horse. It sits on the coast, next to an abandoned park. They serve fried mussels and distilled liquor to various patrons who dock in the harbor. It's a location for finding transportation from the Black Sea to the Aegean.

- Many don't discriminate between passengers or cargo, so contingency plans should be accounted for. Otherwise you'll end up with a container of ghoul leftovers.
- Kane

GECEKONDU ÜSKÜDAR

As previously noted, about a third of the working population for Constantinople live in Üsküdar. The neighborhood is densely packed with two- and three-story homes propped up in ad-hoc city blocks. The streets are more often wide walkways than real roads. Makeshift palisades and scavenged razorwire surround many of the blocks in Uskudar as the people have taken to protecting themselves instead of relying on the Grey Wolves. Roads have been patched up for residents to get to the ferry docks and Marmary Tunnel, but they are often a parking lot in the morning as there's no right of way for traffic.

- The right of way goes to whoever has the right of way. Park at your own risk at the ferry dock, as it's often a campsite for those trying to get on the early ferry.
- Traveler Jones

In Üsküdar, there is a Dar-üs Sifa (health center) hidden among the houses. Called the Yeni, it looks dark and is tagged with graffiti, but inside the reinforced doors, they have a fairly up-to-date bodyshop. The front lobby has booths for tattoo artists as the customers look for the addition or removal of gang tattoos. Heavy hookah smoke and focused light obscures the back rooms. Beyond the smoke are the Yeni Center's cybernetic installation shops. There is no merchandise hanging on the walls. They haven't sold any cyberware since the war. What they can do, however, is repair damaged wares. They also expect customers to come in from the Janissaries or Grand Bazaar to get whatever piece they purchased installed.

- They won't turn away the wounded, provided that you can pay triple the going medical rate up front.
- Pistons

JANISSARIES' BAZAAR

With the Yavus Bridge open and the coast of the Black Sea relatively empty of the NEEC ships that are farther south, the Janissaries' Bazaar resides in the remains of Yoros Castle overlooking Bosphorus strait. In front of the towers, many blankets are laid out by peddlers, selling repackaged ammo, blades, and handguns for barter in most cases.

- The bazaar is littered with scavengers selling whatever they scrounged from the dead; from used armor and unspent ammo, to boots and k-rations. An unclean lot who are barely tolerated.
- Traveler Jones

Inside the castle (which requires an entrance fee) are the bigger toys: missiles, tanks, ships, and more. Mostly Russian made, with some Chinese knockoffs. You won't get to see the real items unless you lay some cash down; if you're browsing, you look at AROs. The real items are left near the Black Sea, so interested parties are purchasing coordinates where they can pick up that size of weaponry. The Grey Wolves are also inside the castle, but only a percentage of their business is tied to weapon sales. These days they offer various automatic and assault firearms through third parties, now that they are semi-legit.

- There's some competition between the Grand Bazaar and the Janissaries' Bazaar. Much of it is because Kamil isn't intimidated by Spartak. Both have their supporters in the council, but Spartak has many things to deal with, while Kamil only has the various trade networks. As much as Spartak tries to get his hands on the dealers in the Grand Bazaar, he will get slapped down by Kamil.
- Traveler Jones

- Kamil has already put out a proposal to the council to put the Janissaries' Bazaar under his control now that Grey

Wolves are contracted as security in the Asian suburb. It's tricky since it's not an official bazaar.
- Goat Foot

MAIDEN'S TOWER

The Maiden's Tower has seen its share of wars over the centuries. Functionality flip-flopped from fortification to food stuff so often over the years that it was hard to tell what would come out of it. The last military occupation was with the U.N., and they used the tower to monitor all traffic through and beneath the Bosphorus. During the latest war, there were attempts to take out the tower, but it survived. Today, the U.N. still has personnel there as they work to transition the responsibilities to local police efforts.

- One of the stories about the Maiden's Tower is that ghosts walks around it and phantom ships dock in the harbor. These have been used as explanations to why the Maiden's Tower wasn't destroyed in the thirty-year war. One guy swore that during some heated skirmishes, he retreated back to shore after seeing Venetian warships come through the fog. The ships he described were wooden galleons.
- Sounder

SABIHA GÖKÇEN AIRPORT

This airport has seen better years, possibly decades. Situated fifty kilometers east of Kadıköy, it was officially shut down in 2043 after terrorists attacked flights from there with SAMs. Pulverized asphalt, a rusted tower, and skeletonized hangars are what remain of the runways. The terminals have become home to various people who do not wish to be found. The roof and windows have been patched up enough to keep out the elements. Any power is limited and jealously hoarded. The Yuxa clan operates out of the airport, trading contraband and supplies for use of the runway. Rumors have it that they buried mines and IEDs on the runways to prevent people from using them without paying the fee.

- Nighttime drops and occasional landings occur at the airport. Marston mats are rolled out at night to allow smugglers to land, trade their goods, and then get out before anyone notices. Before dawn, the mats are rolled up.
- Traveler Jones

- It's still years away from having Constantinople repair the infrastructure to the airport. The only problem that the Yuxa have is with the Grey Wolves. With 10,000 Daggers keeping the peace, Yuxa was largely ignored as long as they didn't rock the boat. Grey Wolves are trying to take over the operations.
- Red Anya

- The Yuxa clan is quick with lots of little tunnels, poisons, and booby traps. Unless the Grey Wolves level the airport and make it useless to everyone, it's too costly for them to start a fight.
- Balladeer

GERV DEVERI
Metatype: Ork
Sex: Male
Age: Young
Connection Rating: 3
Type: Swag
Preferred payment method: Certified credsticks
Hobbies/vice: Smoking
Personal life: Single
Background: Dealer at the Janissaries' Bazaar

BOSPHORUS

Most of the Bosphorus neighborhood is hills and forests. Small residential neighborhoods are scattered around the more luxurious homes on the hillside, away from much of the unrest. Some of the neighborhoods would rather still consider themselves as independent fishing villages. The forest and forgotten Roman ruins within are home to shamans, traveling Roma, and the occasional outcast/refugee. Bosphorus is more known for the BCT as it crosses just south of the Yavus Bridge. The actual entrance to the BCT starts several kilometers inland, near the Elmak Apartments.

RUMELI CITADEL

Rumeli sits on the narrowest point of the Bosphorus. Its strategic usefulness passed many centuries ago, but the thick stone walls and tall towers make its presence known. It was largely rebuilt in the eighteenth century, and more modern restoration was done last century. Around the 2050s, it was used as a prison for foreign soldiers during the EuroWars. Unconfirmed rumors were that the Citadel was used as an interrogation center by NEEC. While parts of the citadel have been reopened to the public (including a cultural museum), some places remain off limits.

YAVUS BRIDGE

The Yavus is the easternmost bridge that crosses the Bosphorus, just a few kilometers from the Black Sea. It's also the only bridge that still crosses the Bosphorus strait, as the First Bosphorus and Fatih were destroyed in early days of the civil war. This led to the decision to

suspend use of the bridge and force everyone to use the ferries. With the three tunnels open and Yavus' remoteness, it is the least secured bridge to travel across.

FATIH FORMER BRIDGE

Fatih was severely damaged to the point it was demolished to prevent anyone using it or having debris falling on ships below. What remains of the suspension bridge are the twin peaks where the cables connected. Deckers have repurposed the remains as anonymous laser communication towers. The precision and accuracy of the bridge towers' original engineering made the communications conversion quick and easy.

- The Polis have attempted to arrest trespassers, but the deckers' use of drones and line-of-sight connections makes the work futile
- Netcat

SHARKOV FREIGHTER

Well known from the Bosphorus Bling incident, this freighter ran aground in the Saiyer neighborhood into a little park. A small concrete dock jutting over the water in front of the park was enough to tear through the hull, causing it to sink as it plowed into the playground equipment. Because of the grey area of its origin and contents, the freighter is also stuck in a quagmire of red tape on ownership, salvage, and costs. The Polis already confiscated the cargo of weapons, leaving the ship empty. While the Sharkov is still part of an ongoing investigation, it's also become a tourist attraction. Local businesses near the freighter have taken advantage of this, selling things from t-shirts to specialty sandwiches. One group has unsanctioned tours of the freighter, complete with AR footage.

- Silly. There are much better things to do in Bosphorus than see a rusting freighter. I can go to the Golden Horn and see a dozen of them unloading cargo.
- Kane

DOLMABAHÇE PALACE

One of the most glamorous mansions in the world, this palace features Ottoman-style architecture. It was completed in the nineteenth century and has served as home to six sultans. It is also the largest palace in Turkey at 45,000 square meters. It was one of the true beauties of the city until it was ransacked in 2052. All of the artwork, gold, even the crystal chandeliers were taken; the loss was estimated at several million nuyen. While it was a museum most of the twenty-first century, today it remains mostly abandoned—with the occasional squatter.

- The council talks about restoring it, but nothing has been done.
- Red Anya
- 10,000 Daggers has a standing reward for the artwork. So far only a handful of pieces have been reclaimed. They have not, once recovered, made their way back to the museum as of yet.
- Fianchetto

EMIRGAN PARK

This historical sixteenth-century park has maintained its beautiful waterfalls and fountains throughout the centuries. The one hundred seventeen acres of cypress-forested parkland are enclosed by a twelve-meter stone wall. A cobblestone path meanders through the park past colorful gardens and three pavilions (Yellow, White, Pink), allowing visitors to rest and reflect on what is seen in the park. The Pink Pavilion is large enough for an audience of five hundred people. The edge of the park ends at the Bosphorus, with a steep cliff face and stone stairwell to the water.

While the park is open to the public, the pavilions are closed. The Polis have a strict policy to close the park by 6 p.m. It is believed that the owners of the park do most of the maintenance at night, and they want to keep any automation risk to a minimum. Like the Broceliande forest, Emirgan Park is home to a colony of fae. Decades ago, the fae, led by Irshi, came to the council to claim ownership over Emirgan Park as per an agreement made long ago when the city was called Lygos. While the council naturally disbelieved the claim, they didn't want the same kind of Awakened incident as occurred in other nations. They agreed to the terms.

- That's the story, but with the fantasies surrounding Seelie and Unseelie courts and the more recent Yellowstone incident, it's better that the people not know that there are fae living in those pavilions. Lights seen in the woods are attributed to drones.
- Winterhawk

- Everyone has their own mythologies. It would have been surprising *not* to hear of Awakened beings around here.
- Mika

CEMIL MOLLA PAVILION

This nineteenth-century mansion was home to Statesman Cemil Molla. Its design was Ottoman, but there was a push for modernism, even then-futuristic touches such as electricity and central heating. It was the first home outside the palace to have a telephone and lights powered by a diesel engine. Space was made in the walls and floors for any necessary upgrades. It was a focal point for high society. Over a century ago, during the last days of the Ottoman empire and the rise of the republic, Molla fell out of favor with the new government and family debts began to pile up. He couldn't maintain the home. In 1941, the property was seized

and sold to another family. When that family moved in, tragedy struck with the son dying in a traffic accident near the home and the father passing soon after. Since then, the home has been left vacant. There were several attempts in the 1970s and '80s to renovate the home as a heritage site, but workers were terrified by sounds and apparitions at the house, leaving work incomplete. In 2012, a third attempt at renovation met with disaster. Six months into the project, workers encountered structural elements that weren't in the original plans. An unseen gas line to the cellar caused a flashfire, killing six workers and doing minor damage to the rest of the room. The home has been left abandoned all these years since then. Rumors of ghosts have kept most people away. Awakened visitors have been chilled by the background that surrounds the house.

- And yet no one still knows where that gas line is.
- Plan 9

GALATA

Galata district covers both Galata and Beyoglu neighborhoods. This used to be the place where all kinds of important business happened, with banks and embassies on the hill in the middle of Galata to the docks and trading posts below. Even when the Ottomans conquered Istanbul, they left the place untouched—they knew its importance. It has not been the same with the fanatics and civil war. Both the Galata and Atatürk Bridges have been damaged and repaired several times over the years, leaving ugly scars. Ares Macrotech masked much of the warfare with reinforced walls throughout the district protecting the plethora of modern offices and ancient mosques. While the literal shadow of New City falls over Galata, the district is still alive with intrigue.

GALATA BRIDGE

This bridge connects Old City to Galata. Artillery damage over a decade ago expedited repairs and reinforcement of this one-hundred-seventy-plus-year-old bridge. Blue painted steel and grey concrete, while not aesthetically appealing, don't keep the bridge from achieving functionality. It's one of the main commuter bridges and stays busy with six traffic lanes, two tram lanes, and two pedestrian paths on the upper level. It's crowded almost all day with commuters and tourists.

Fishermen compete with hawkers of treats and trinkets for space along the bridge, working to avoid being knocked around by the people crossing.

- Be wary of the "clumsy" shoe shiner/delivery boy who drops their stuff in front of you. If you help them, they are either going to reward you with a shoe shine that they expect you to pay, or your stuff will be accidentally mixed with his, and you won't see it or him again.
- Cayman

The smells of baked goods and fish mix with ozone and vehicle exhaust, enticing the hungry to descend to the lower level of the bridge. Here there are bars offering beer and nargile, and restaurants selling a variety of fish dishes or fresh-baked simits. Competition can be aggressive at times, as floating kitchens will board the lower deck of the bridge to reroute customers to their cuisine. It's hard not to cross this bridge without someone delivering a sales pitch to you.

- "Aggressive" is an understatement. 2 a.m. boarding parties can turn into bar-clearing brawls with dozens of people thrown off the bridge. Deaths are infrequent, but they happen.
- Ma'Fan

- Not a bad way to get shanghaied. At least the food and drink would be better.
- Kane

GALATA TOWER

The cylindrical tower was built in 1348 and was the tallest structure for centuries. Back in the seventeenth century, a daring Turk aviator launched himself from the tower and flew six kilometers to the Asian side of the Bosphorus. Today, Hezarfen riggers, named for that pilot, are stationed in the tower. The balcony has become a landing/launch platform with an octagonal cocoon seating for the riggers. From here, their aero drones oversee Constantinople's defenses.

- Hezarfen is what you get when you allow 10,000 Daggers to train people for law enforcement. High-speed, close-quarter combat drones that can perch on buildings like mechanized gargoyles.
- Rigger X

- Not so bad. Better than what it was four or five years ago. I'd rather deal with Hezarfen than straight 10,000 Daggers. Hezarfen riggers don't always kill on sight.
- Mika

The tourists can get a virtual view of the tower from the gift shop below, but the more prominent Pirnic and Ejderha skyrakers now overshadow Galata from New City. The neighborhood around Galata tower is a mix of trendy boutiques and restaurants and businesses catering to tourists.

GECEKONDU TARLABASI

A few minutes' walk from Istiklal, the scenery quickly changes from bustling streets filled with tourists and money to that of slums and poverty close to the heart of the sprawl. Many of the old houses are partially gutted from a failed renovation of the neighborhood several decades ago. Heavy plastic sheeting, old billboards, and scrap wood have been used by tenants to turn open floors into some semblance of home.

- Those living in Tarlabasi are often foreigners who believe the city is the best place to restart their lives. Unfortunately, not everyone agrees.
- Traveler Jones

MEVLEVI TEKKE

It's the oldest of the lodges for the Islamic tradition of Whirling Dervishes. Just south of the tunnel, the Melevi Tekke is part of a complex that includes a fountain, the tomb of the founder of this hall, and a cemetery filled with stones carved with graceful inscriptions. Off and on, the Dervishes were banned from practicing. For most of the decade, the lodge was more of a museum displaying historical objects of the order.

- In secret, until recently, members of the order have been training at the lodge. Many of them are Awakened practitioners.
- Lyran

ISTIKLAL CADDESI

Once called the Grand Rue de Pera, this pedestrian-only boulevard includes many twenty-first-century boutiques and cafés wrapped in nineteenth-century Ottoman architecture. It is also nicknamed Embassy Row, as embassies are scattered throughout. Narrow side streets tempt detours, as the sound of live music and laughter emanate from quaint bars offering raki and local cuisine. Some people say that Istiklal is in competition with the Grand Bazaar, but that's like saying red is in competition with blue. They complement each other more with their uniqueness. An old-school metro tram runs down the middle of Istaklal Street for those who want to observe and not worry about where they walk.

- Istaklal has been marred in the past by terrorist bombings and civil unrest. Great progress has been made in the restoration of the buildings' facades to cover any scars. Drones are frequent enough now in their patrols over the streets from the various governing and corporate bodies that AR projections of art deco designs are used to cover the autonomous traffic lanes above tourists' heads.
- Traveler Jones

- Everything is above a tourist's head. Rimshot.
- Cosmo

- Istiklal Street has much more high-end goods in more traditional-style stores (art, hardbound books, etc.). If you are looking for intel, this is also the street to start with. France, Russia, CAS, UCAS, and various Southeast Asian nations have consulates here. There's over twenty such buildings here, mainly European. Many watch the Iron Silk Road, overseeing their government's use of the railway; many others watch everyone else's business.
- Thorn

TAKSIM GEZI PARK

This high-class park is one of the last green places in the heart of Constantinople. Located near Taksim Square, this park is a lightly forested area surrounding a fountain. It's a popular place for food vendors trying to catch wageslaves crossing the square from work. Artists also display and sell their work; that's an easy disguise for those who want to give themselves a reason to stay in the neighborhood and look like they belong.

TAKSIM SQUARE

Taksim Square starts at the end of Istiklal Avenue. It is the heart of modern Constantinople, and its center holds the city's most important monument, the Independence Monument. The physical part symbolizes the foundation of the republic and the war of independence. The AR overlay covers the formation of Constantinople as a free city. On the south side is the cultural center that hosts many performances, from operas and symphonic orchestras to theatre.

- This is a good, open place with crowds and few tall buildings for surveillance or sniping.
- Stone

- Anything can start here. People are pliable when they are enjoying themselves and relatively distracted by entertainment.
- Thorn

TÜNEL

Tünel is the second-oldest subterranean railway in the world, built in 1875 (oldest is the London Underground, dating from 1863). It's only roughly six hundred meters long, and it contains two stations. It still hangs on, making hourly trips from the center of Galata down to the harbor. There was a time, once, when the railway didn't run. For months, people found their way into the railway tunnel. Service alcoves became residences, and more ambitious explorers broke through stone to find the old Ottoman waterways. Today's railway has been refurbished with newer trains for passengers. The occasional hitchhiker grabs hold of the line, using it to take them over the subterranean waterway, which they often drop into.

- Dangerous way to travel. There's about one death a month from someone not timing when the trains arrive. Not all are found, as they fall into the waterway and end up in the Golden Horn.
- Ecotope

BALIK EKMEK

The gaudy balık ekmek (fish in bread) boats still can be seen from the Golden Horn to Sultanahmet. They dock anywhere they see a crowd and sell their fish sandwiches. Galata Bridge is generally the best place to catch them. The boats are very colorful, with as much neon lighting and AR as they can afford. Many of these craft are very old, being handed down within a family for several generations. When the cook is working, steam and black smoke from burning fish oil billow from the stovepipe.

Over-fishing has made the "catch and cook" philosophy of balik ekmek boats impossible. So they adapted by importing flash-frozen fish or establishing fish farms for daily catches. The grilled fish fillet on a bun with a scoop of fake salata (lettuce, onion, tomato) may not be the most nutritious nor the most sanitary, given the location, but given the choice of soy products versus balik ekmek, the residents choose balik ekmek. Ferries allow the boats to come up alongside to feed the commuters as they go to work in the morning.

Another of the real items that the ships can offer is the drink known as salgam. It's a mixture of water, juice from pickled carrots, boiled turnips, and pulverized bulgur wheat. Salgam is another cheap item for the masses that can keep you going when you need some sort of fuel.

GOLDEN HORN

The Golden Horn covers the estuary and the neighborhood along its banks. It was used heavily during the industrial revolution, making pollution spill into the estuary. So much so that the horrific smells ruined the prospects of mansions being built along there. Attempts were made to clean up the Golden Horn, but war changed the city's priorities. The ruins of many industrial complexes and abandoned luxury homes rest along the water's edge.

The Golden Horn is busy with container ships picking up or dropping off a variety of cargo from the BCT. Other traffic includes fishing and tour boats zipping around for space. Even in the evening, smugglers cruise into the Golden Horn, dropping off illegal goods or refugees. Two small islands sit in the middle of the estuary, populated by the criminal and the destitute. Beached boats and other debris have been converted into shanty homes. A palisade surrounds the islands, as many of the refugees there had become victims of slave traffickers. Not wanting to start any disputes, local ship captains continue to ignore the islands other than as a water hazard. The Polis question if they have jurisdiction, as the islands have no connection to the mainland. Above the Golden Horn, four bridges (Galata, Atatürk, Metro, and Haliç) cross the harbor from Golden Horn to Galata and from Galata to Old City, bringing traffic and pollution to the area.

EYÜP MOSQUE COMPLEX

This is the holiest Islamic shrine in the city. The complex includes the tomb of Eyüp al Ansari, standard bearer of the prophet Muhammad, and an adjoining mosque constructed in the fifteenth century, then rebuilt in the nineteenth century after earthquake damage. The background count is steady around the complex, and seems to originate from the Sword of Osman on display in the mosque. Every sultan was girded with the Sword of Osman during the coronation ceremony held here. The Sword of Osman dates from the twelfth century, made for Osman I, founder of the Ottoman Empire. Interestingly enough, the sword can be seen on the astral plane. This then puts to question if the Turkish alchemists somehow created an artifact, or if the sword was made with something older that carried magic power with it.

- The council doesn't want to touch the blade. They believe it's something like Excalibur, waiting for the right ruler. Attempts to move the blade have proven disastrous. The last time was with extremists attempting to plunder the mosque. Everyone in the complex was knocked unconscious by a blast as the blade returned itself to the dais.
- Winterhawk

HALAT NAVAL STATION

While it's called a naval station, Halat is more of a parking spot for the Turkish navy as they lease the land from the independent city of Constantinople. Halat engineering crews have dredged the Golden Horn deep enough to allow destroyers and submarines to maneuver easily up the horn to this location. Between three and six military ships are parked here most times. A small dry dock allows repairs to a single ship. Next to the base offices is a hangar to maintain and refuel helicopters. It's large enough for even airships to be maintained.

- Some ten to twelve years ago, a bomber landed in the parking lot at the naval station. While no one was hurt, there wasn't enough space for it to take off again. It's been towed to a more favorable location but hasn't been removed. The next-door French café, Du Devant, has since enjoyed an uptick in sales, as people like seeing the bomber and other military vehicles at the station.
- Red Anya

THE TURQUOISE HOUSE

This hotel and restaurant is actually seven buildings surrounding a courtyard. It is situated up on a hill to give guests a good view of the Golden Horn. The name of the house comes from the blue-green tiled mosaic rediscovered in the construction of the hotel. Archeologists realized that the location was originally a Roman Villa. The pattern was restored and repeated on the walls surrounding the courtyard.

NEW CITY

New City is the corporate heart of Constantinople covering neighborhoods like Elmadag, Nisantası, Kurtulus, and Sisli. Even with fighting, New City kept up appearances of normalcy with decorative mosaics to mask checkpoints. Like a dark crown, corporate spires reach high over the other districts, with the tallest being Ejderha (Dragon) Tower. These corporate towers are the tallest in all of Turkey. While tourists flock to places Galata and Sultanahmet, wageslaves make their way into one of the corporate enclaves. Still, there are things to do in New City besides business. Nestled between the old sapphire building and Ejderha is the Nisantası neighborhood. Here, artists and writers have found solitude in Art Nuevo apartments, die-hard mom & pop cafes, and old-world pubs. Around them are the wageslave-centered stores and foodstuffs installed by the corporations along with high-class executive parks that seem to push out anything messy in exchange for a sanitized business view.

- Yeah, I prefer General Sosa's if I go into New City. Simple wraps in the afternoon and belly dancing in the evening.
- Traveler Jones

AYLIN BROSHNI

Metatype: Troll
Sex: Male
Age: Young
Connection Rating: 3
Type: Transportation
Preferred payment method: Certified credstick
Hobbies/vice: Rakı
Personal life: Single
Background: Ship captain and chef for the Dakari, Aylin is a fairly fast cook, using large steel grill sheets to prepare a dozen fillets at a time while giving people a top-notch show. Being a balık ekmek captain means that people expect him to cruise around the Golden Horn or Bosphorus Strait, docking wherever he feels like it, in order to feed people. This means that for a fair price and time cleaning the deck and kitchen, Aylin can transport you to many locations around Constantinople. He even gives you a sack lunch when you leave.

- Corporations have been slow to enter Constantinople. There's the approval by the council that's required, and with all the political games, the current players like their monopoly. This is changing, though, with SK's exit.
- Picador

ABDI IPEKÇI AVENUE

If you want to look like you have money, enjoy a stroll down Abdi Ipekçi Avenue, home of the most expensive retail stores you can find, including the Pirnic building. Beautiful nineteenth- and twentieth-century architectural designs with sweeping shapes complement statues and turn-of-the-century clocks and street lighting. You can still see the old Gucci building sign in what now holds Zoe de Paris. Across the way is Rhine Gold with human tailors ready to serve. Armanté has both a retail store and a café on this street, where even the utensils are designer-made. A wealth of fancy cuisines and dishes served only to the sultans of old can be eaten at a few venues along the avenue.

- It would not be your imagination if it looks like the gargoyles are watching you. It's probably Polis riggers.
- Cayman

EJDERHA

Clad in black marble and glass, the Ejderha, Saeder-Krupp's old HQ, has been mostly empty the past couple of years, as SK moved their assets out leaving only a few floors of their corporate presence. The three landing platforms on the "neck" of the tower have been

virtually abandoned, as have many of the upper floors with the exception of drone maintenance crew. The rest of the five-hundred-fifty-meter tower has been sold or rented in pieces to smaller corporations and a few wealthy individuals. Today it's still thirty percent vacant, as SK has some strict conditions on those who want to use their building.

- One of the selling points of Ejderha is that the subfloors have their own connecting railway from the Marmaray and BCT, allowing large cargo to be delivered with little observation.
- Pistons

- The real question is, why did SK leave Constantinople prior to restoring peace? Their moving leaves control of Constantinople a bit open.
- Plan 9

GENERAL SOSA

Between Galata and New City is an entertaining bar/restaurant that is frequented by local and foreign shadowrunners alike. General Sosa is a fictional Turkish general from the future in a slightly old trid. Much of the special effects were pirated from other older sci-fi trids, though in the end it became a cult classic. Two other trids were produced for General Sosa to round out the series of his adventures in the early 2050s.

General Sosa the restaurant sells cheap falafel to customers while they are surrounded by vintage props and studio equipment, salvaged when the Yesil Yapim entertainment company went out of business. Entertainment always includes re-enactments from the movie, including the space belly dancers. The cheap meals, noisy atmosphere, and off-the-beaten-path location makes it a common meeting spot in New City.

- Amalgamated Studios is trying to buy the rights to General Sosa and reboot the story. Not that I wouldn't mind, but I've heard that the producers also want to do a Neil/Sosa crossover. Gahhh! They are not even in the same style or story universe, people!
- Slamm-0!

ARZU KAPROL

Metatype: Human
Sex: Male
Age: Young
Connection Rating: 2
Type: Merchandise
Preferred payment method: Bank transfer
Hobbies/vice: Twentieth-century trids
Personal life: Married
Background: Kaprol is a Paris-trained fashion designer who returned to Constantinople and started his own business, where sleek contemporary designs combine with Turkish traditional apparel. Kaprol's studio sits at the very end of Abdi Ipekçi Avenue. His cross of Victorian fashion with Arabian Nights themes is the hit of the latest season. He's always available to help a friend dress for success, as it's free advertisement for him.

GEREKLI

Located along one of the narrow streets with a neo-baroque face among classic European architecture is Gerekli. Gerekli's is a specialized electronic store for many games. They work on retro pinball and console games while also supplying accessories and holo projectors for the hottest AR games. Upstairs, Gerekli has a blast-from-the-past arcade, much of which was salvaged from derelict European and Soviet cruise ships.

- Though things are priced a little higher than normal, Gerekli can help you with getting components for your "commlink." They have enough parts lying around that you can build all kinds of toys—that is if you aren't losing nuyen to the games upstairs.
- Glitch

PIRNIC

This great brass tower holds much of the operations for Bionergetica. Inside, bioluminescent lamps and thermal digesters are presented as points of pride for this corporation. Bionergetica has been working diligently in small and medium-sized organic technologies. The four-hundred-meter tower is mostly occupied by Bionergetica facilities and offices, but the lower floors are open to high-tech/high-priced merchandise.

- If you have to ask the price, they'll wonder why you are there.
- Pistons

CONSTANTINOPLE HOUSE OF JUSTICE

Constantinople's judicial building is large and imposing. It contains six stories and serves court hearings for all the various laws of the free city. It's also where you go to pay fines and get permits and passes while in Istanbul. A unit of Yunislar officers are there to support the Justice Department's security detail. Its recent past has not been so kind. There were summary executions done in the lower parking levels—so many that, at one point, sprinklers were installed that can be manually triggered, for ease of cleaning.

- The recurring problems with the electrical and sprinkler system down there has convinced the maintenance crew that something supernatural is going on. Few people park down there if they don't have to. Not for fear of the rumored ghosts, but because they don't want to stumble in the dark or get soaked before a hearing.
- Ethernaut

- It's also possible that some Awakened or toxic critter has found a home there. Gremlins or boggles, for example.
- G-Nome

SULTANAHMET—OLD CITY

When people travel to Constantinople, many never leave the old city. It is crammed with history. Monuments from the Roman period sit next to churches and palaces from the Byzantine and Ottoman eras. Even beneath the streets are aqueducts and secret tunnels that the Emperor Constantine would use. There are plenty of things for travelers to see or do. The spot has seen better days, as multiple groups have traded control over the city. While the blood and debris have been cleaned up, the anxiety from the events still lingers.

BLUE MOSQUE

The Blue Mosque is another iconic image of the city's landscape. The architectural arrangement of cascading domes and six minarets makes the mosque beautifully unique. Its name comes from the twenty thousand blue tiles used within those domes. Unfortunately, much of the original mosque has had to be replaced. Damage from natural disasters and war has taken its toll. In some cases, AR is used to mask the replaced glass with subtle stained glass imagery, making the mosque look whole.

- Bits of tile have been sold on the black market as potent reagents. This has many residents upset. The council has actually executed contractors they found unnecessarily replacing parts of the mosque. There's a hefty penalty for anyone caught with material related to any of the mosques or sites of antiquity.
- Winterhawk

- The AR tiles are great spots for old-fashioned info exchanges like pigeon drops—well hidden, unobserved by most visitors, but easily accessible without having to remove a tile or any such thing.
- Thorn

EMINÖNÜ

Eminönü is Constantinople's crossroads. It is here that cargo ships, ferries, trains, trams, and freeways all meet to exchange their cargo. The place has constant traffic all day long, with people picking up and dropping off freight—and sometimes other people. Small mountains of cargo containers, up to ten meters tall, rest here in a maze of various-sized stacks. Some wait for the next freight train, some wait for a ship. Some are opened up here to be delivered. At the edge of Eminönü is an early-morning street market for the few items that may have "fallen off the truck."

- Some of the containers can sit here for days—months if the cargo perishes before delivery, as the legal battle has to be done in order to know who is going to pay for the mess. Now, if you don't mind a little smell, these cargo containers are hardly touched by the Polis, since who would want to steal five hundred gallons of spoiled yogurt? Doesn't matter if said yogurt actually arrived in that container.
- Slamm-0!

- That will *not* be how we take a family vacation!
- Netcat

FEZ ONLY CAFÉ

Built within the old hatter store, the Fez Only Café relies on the history of the place and tourists' love of novelty. Other places require wearing a tie; this café requires wearing a fez with your Turkish kahve, falafel, baklava, and lokum. Food and drink are moderately priced and served among the simple tile and glass decorations. Tables are small, seating two or three at a time. Also for sale at the café are high-end towels, sheets, and of course, fezzes.

- Never gets old to tell a team to meet their contact there and tell them he'll be the one wearing a fez.
- Pistons

- Maybe for you, but I get tired of chasing the Anonymous Businessmen through that place.
- Hard Exit

- Anonymous Businessmen?
- Slamm-0!

- Small-time gang with panache and enough scratch to look corporate. Hard to tell if I'm chasing a bystander or the real deal. Twice they've poached my deals.
- Chainmaker

GRAND BAZAAR

Commissioned in 1453 to provide financial resources for the Hagia Sophia, the Grand Bazaar now provides lucrative income for the free city of Constantinople. Brick-vaulted arches cover much of the original bazaar's venue, with the streets enclosed using more modern materials to shade and cool merchants and

tourists alike. The Grand Bazaar is surrounded by a wall with twenty-one gates that the police use to attempt to maintain security and safety for all within. There are over four thousand dolaps (stores) along fifty-six streets, organized with like items on the same street. Clothing can be found in Sandal Bestern; reagents on Yaglikgilar; and jewelry on Kalpakcilarbasi. Dead ends now lead to virtual shops for larger or more illegal items (if you know where to look) that can be picked up outside of the Bazaar. Store names are meaningless in here; it's just buyer and seller on a street where you expect to find the goods you need. For many, the shop is an arching wall where you attach scaffolding to hang purses, copper ware, or even drones. Walk-in stores are more like large alcoves that provide three walls of inventory instead of one.

- The streets used to be named for the service or laborers that can be found there. Almost none of those primitive skills are requested or provided anymore. However, there are coffee shops that cater to negotiations for services; mercenaries, street docs, shadowrunners, etc. Face and fixer alike can enjoy a cup of Turkish coffee at one of a dozen coffee shops as they wait here for business.
- Traveler Jones

- The Grand Bazaar is managed by Kamil Argubedi, head of the Bazaar Association. If you want a spot to sell within the bazaar, you have to negotiate with his associates.
- Dr. Spin

Besides shopping, there are seventeen hans (inns) for those to find rest and respite from the chaos. Many, however, have converted to western ideals akin to mini-malls, with the upper floor for residents and lower floors for quick sales by way of modern corporate stores. While it appears to be open 24-7, the Grand Bazaar (excluding the hans) is open from 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Hans keep more tourist-friendly hours, so they extend from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. During religious holidays, the whole bazaar is closed for business, no exceptions.

Security is difficult here with the crowds; the Polis rely more heavily on watchers and spirits to monitor and/or detain criminals, as it may be a few minutes before back-up gets through the bazaar. Often the police enforce protection of tourists at the expense of illegal trade.

- Beneath the Grand Bazaar is a cistern, allowing traders to lower buckets to collect water to cool off. Occasionally delivery drones will hitch a ride in one if they get lost.
- Pistons

HAGIA SOPHIA

Since 537 AD, the Hagia Sophia has served as the world's largest Greek Orthodox cathedral. Construction of the dome was an architectural wonder of its time, rising to a height of fifty-five meters. Hundreds of religious and non-religious artifacts were stored here, some even older than the cathedral itself. When the Turks, led by Mehmed the Conquerer, defeated Constantinople in 1453, Mehmed converted the spot into a mosque, adding the minarets and removing much of the iconic Orthodox items. In the conquest of Constantinople, the treasures within Hagia Sophia were looted by the soldiers. Another possibility for the whereabouts of some of the artifacts is that the priests were able to hide them beneath the cathedral. Churches at the time were already noted to bury saints and priests beneath the structures. Rumors ranging from John the Baptist's remains to Gagnon's Panopticon being hidden beneath the cathedral continue to persist as more subterranean structures come to light. The last official attempt to map the tunnels beneath Hagia Sophia occurred in 2012.

- Officially, nothing was found except for a few bottles of holy water and some items of war from the time the British had occupied the place in 1918. But you and me know that the Sixth World got kicked off then. There's grainy flatvid footage of mosaic angels in a vast room below Hagia Sophia, so who knows what got sealed up by the government.
- Plan 9

HIPPODROME

While the physical remains of the Hippodrome consist of a few obelisks near Sultanahmet square, the whole Hippodrome is visible from astral space, in all its grandeur . Many arcanoarcheologists have recorded observations of the structure, checking historical documents to confirm that the astral shadow is indeed accurate. During a good rainstorm, phantom chariots have been seen racing around the park. Below ground are water-filled chambers and tunnels, remnants of days of fifth-century Byzantine Emperor Theodosius II and the rumored tunnels he took to travel to the Hippodrome from the Tekfur Palace.

SPICE BAZAAR

The Spice Bazaar is also known as the Egyptian Bazaar, as it was where Egyptian goods were taxed. Bio-Awakened drugs, spices, and organic telesma can be found here. The earthy smells can be overpowering during midday when there's no breeze. While variety has been significantly reduced, there is still an amazing rainbow of colored spices. Since the end of the war, there has been a growing market of small businessmen selling goods from all over Anatolia in Constantinople. Dried fruits, nuts, caviar, and homemade Turkish delights make many tourists hungry as they cross through.

- Real coffee beans are sold here. Get there in the early morning, because quantities are very small.
- Goat Foot

- Within the Spice Bazaar are batches of frankenspice—genetically modified plants with various drug properties, probably from some corporate wageslave getting a few extra bucks with pet projects. The trade is unregulated, as who's going to check if the petunias contain THC.
- Nephrine

- What's annoying are the counterfeiters who try selling their goods at the Spice Bazaar. They've been kicked out of the Grand Bazaar and have bullied their way into the Spice Bazaar. Sure it's cheap, but I wouldn't feel confident wearing or using any of it.
- Mika

TOPKAPI PALACE

After the conquest of Istanbul in 1453, Mehmed the Conqueror built Topkapi palace. It sits on the Istanbul peninsula surrounded by acres of park and the remains of a Roman necropolis. For most of the twentieth century it was a museum, but after the Neo-Ataturk took power, it became the city's residence for a five-person (or six-person) council. The palace has seen bloody coups three times in the past twenty years as the civil war pushed various council members into control of the city. There are four separate gates into the palace. Each has its own architectural style and meaning, and each leads to separate courts and rooms. After a fire occurred during the last coup, ruining the first court and killing a council member, the council now meets in the second court. The current council has recently decided to bring the Asian Suburbs back to voting with the council. Vaspin Erdo will probably become the seventh member of the council, reuniting all of Constantinople.

- Celal Okyar is also being pushed by Nalvandian of the Grey Wolves, but his pockets aren't as deep as Ares and S-K, who like Vaspin.
- Cosmo

KAMIL ARGUBEDI

Metatype: Human
Sex: Male
Age: Middle-aged
Connection Rating: 6
Type: Networking
Preferred payment method: Certified credstick
Hobbies/vice: Novacoke
Personal life: Married with children
Background: Mr. Kamil Argubedi is well-known as the facilitator of the Grand Bazaar. For quite some time, his family has kept the trade goods flowing—and not just through the Grand Bazaar, but also the Spice Bazaar and the Janissaries' Bazaar. He has a respectable reputation, since he normally works through a few secondaries to distance himself from the more illegal trade. Argubedi is not someone to argue with, and he will not be bullied. His rivals have been known ot have accidents or simply disappear. On the other hand, if you are looking for something really hard to find, Argubedi would be the one who might know the dealer who can supply it.

NOD FAREED EL-HASHAM

Metatype: Human
Sex: Male
Age: Middle-aged
Connection Rating: 4
Type: Fixer
Preferred payment method: Certified credstick
Hobbies/vice: Weaving
Personal life: Single
Background: This man appears apathetic to the tourists looking to buy one of his rugs. Sure, he smiles, but there's none of the usual haggling over prices. It's only when you ask about a specific rug that he brings you to the back and gets down to business. He is the face for Damokles, negotiating any work required of them. Nod is a callous character and will speak plainly, itemizing every bit of an account, even the death of a shadowrunner. Kamil tolerates Nod working at the Grand Bazaar, but he would prefer that valuable space be used by actual merchants.

- While official Constantinople actions and dealings are presented in the second court, corporations and governments meet with council members in the third court in the hope of influencing the council's agenda. Then you have the more arrogant Nalvandian, who expects the council to see him in the fourth court.
- Goat Foot

WALLS OF CONSTANTINOPLE

Consisting of the original city, the Sultanahmet district was surrounded by defensive walls starting in the fourth century. Much of the walls survived until the nineteenth century. The wall completely surrounded the city and ran along the Golden Horn. Added to this defense were chains across the entrance to the Golden Horn, as it was a valuable harbor. When Constantinople declared its independence, it contracted out to Ares the reinforcement and rebuilding of those walls. Off and on for a decade, the walls took on more modern appearance and defensive measures. The walls are not one hundred percent complete, but they offer peace of mind, stopping various attempts to bring weapons or explosives into the Old City. The few rebuilt towers allow the Hezarfen riggers additional stations to recharge and re-equip their drone gargoyles as they patrol Sultanahmet.

- It only stops the amateurs and the fools.
- Kane

YENIKAPI SQUARE

Where would you find a million people celebrating or rallying? Why at Yenikapi Square, of course. This 270,000-square-meter park sits on the edge of the Marmara Sea and has been used in celebration of democracy, the conquering of Istanbul, and Constantinople's independence as a free city. Within the park area are freestanding towers for projecting any concert being performed on the southern end of the square. The stadium seating is transportable and configurable, allowing seating for one hundred fifty thousand people.

- The towers allow any concert or celebration coverage to be displayed pretty much anywhere in the park. The towers also augment any of the firework displays, thanks to their ability to create some of the largest holograms anywhere without magic.
- Winterhawk

WESTERN SUBURBS

Most of the neighborhoods here are residential. The district lies west of Sultanahmet, stretching from the Marmara Sea, west of Lake Büyükçekmece, and northeast to the Golden Horn. It includes neighborhoods like the wealthy Yesilköy to the low-class Bakırköy neighborhoods. While most of the workforce of Constantinople is from the Asian Suburbs, corporations have built enclaves here on the western side of the city with executives living in condos on the scenic coast of the two large lakes. Sprinkled around are western-influenced shopping malls with corporate products from Horizon, Monobe, Evo, Aztechnology, and more.

- It's the first step into extending their influence into the city. Bets are being made on who can fill in the vacuum that Saeder-Krupp left.
- Mr. Bonds

With polluted runoff and remnants of civil war destruction, the farms of the Western Suburbs changed to enclosed hydroponic farms or the more-popular krill and algae farms, selling their products to the local Odnur company to create ethnic food stuffs.

GECEKONDU BAKIRKÖY

Bakırköy contains clusters of various government-built homes near the airport. They were originally promoted for corporations to house their employees, but instead the corporations picked places further west to build. Bakırköy ended up a place for the displaced residents from the construction of new corporate neighborhoods. Corrupt landlords and overcrowding changed Bakırköy into a low-class division. Brownouts and water shortages cause problems here.

- While Erol keeps the streets paved around the neighborhood, he hasn't dealt with the corrupt landlords who subdivide the apartments into places slightly larger than coffin-motel rooms. If he did, he'd start losing votes needed for the council seat.
- Sunshine

- It's a relatively quick trip from the airport to Bakırköy. With the right precautions, no one would know you have arrived, and no one would really care that you are staying there. Mind the bedbugs—they can be toxic.
- Traveler Jones

SEA LIFE AQUARIUM

The Sea Life Aquarium is a smaller version of Aztechnology's One Ocean in San Diego. Most of what the visitors see is from tunnels and domes beneath four-story aquariums. Each aquarium represents a body of water around Constantinople (namely the Black, Marmara, and Aegean seas). Sea Life Aquarium also explains krill and algae farming to the masses with an augmented, interactive farm simulation.

In addition to the plant and animal life, the tanks hold archaeological artifacts of Mediterranean life and sunken ships uncovered during the construction of the many tunnels under the Bosphorus Strait. More treasures continue to be uncovered and displayed here as the seas and strait are scanned for possible unexploded ordnance.

OLYMPIC STADIUM

From a failed bid for the Olympics, this stadium has stayed alive with a focus on football and Turkish teams. With the war going on for so long, it has been the games that kept people sane. During the civil war, the stadium parking lot would occasionally become a tent city with several thousand refugees. The games played on with holo projections for those stuck without a home. Once a month, the stadium continues the tradition with cheap tailgate meals.

VELIEFENDI RACETRACK

The Veliefendi Racetrack is the oldest in the country. It serves as an animal hospital, museum, training grounds, and concert area. The horse racing here is popular, as both the Gazi and Prime Minister's races are still run annually. S-K has also sponsored Ghazi horse racing at Veliefendi to bring more attention to Awakened breeds.

Gambling is not big in Constantinople, but it is present. The Vory have settled near the racetrack to field bets on the races.

- There have been attempts to manipulate the outcome of the races, but S-K's security, especially with their herd of Ghazi residing there, have thwarted drones and magical manipulations.
- Pistons

- Still, there was that one time when both the Grey Wolves and Vory bribed those two jockeys of the favored horses to throw the race. Neither one of them left the starting line. Most embarrassing race for the owners. The Polis had to send in the Sahinler special unit as the crowd rioted, demanding a rerun.
- Traveler Jones

YESILKÖY

South of the airport, this upscale neighborhood contains many townhomes, restaurants, and a harbor with nice-looking fishing vessels and a few yachts. Yesilköy looks like the war never occurred here; no craters or bullet holes are in evidence. Sure, there's secure fencing, but nothing like what was built/upgraded in Sultanahmet. For all appearances, it's a quiet little fishing village. Those who are history buffs may enjoy the military museum, displaying several hundred years' worth of war materiel, including a ship battering ram and a Soviet tank.

- The museum expanded during the civil war, as items removed from Constantinople needed to find a new home. A few modern pieces were added from the 10,000 Daggers' private collection. A bit controversial, seeing as many items were from the recently deceased.
- Kane

Walking around town shows that the architecture is distinct from other neighborhoods; Art Nouveau mix-

es with Cold War Russian buildings. There used to be an old Russian monument here, but it was destroyed in 1918. The people here are nice enough, though quite reserved. They mind their own business and take care of their surroundings, which keeps the place looking nice.

- In the 1970s and 1980s, the place got renovated with nuclear bunkers, trenching for a submarine-entry marina, and spy safehouses. There's even supposed to be a missile silo beneath a barn. All for the purpose of tracking traffic through the Bosphorus. It's all thanks to the KGB and their infiltration as immigrants into Turkey. There are second- and third-generation residents with passcodes handed down from their parents.
- Plan 9

- Really? KGB?
- Thorn

PRINCES' ISLANDS

The Princes' Islands are a small chain of nine islands in the sea of Marmara about twenty kilometers southeast of Constantinople. Byzantine emperors of times past had sent bothersome princes and priests here to be executed or to live out the rest of their days. Today they are quiet preserves of nature with limited technology. No airports to fly in, only docks for ferries. The large islands allow only horse-drawn carriages and bikes to travel around the churches, monasteries, and cafés. Luxury dishes of wine, chips, and sausages can be picked up almost anywhere. The five smaller islands—Tavsan, Yassı (Plati), Sivri (Oxia), Sedef, and Kasık (Pita)—are not served by ferries and are leased by corporate entities.

During much of the civil war, the islands tried to distance themselves from the rest of the nation's destruction. Refugees flocked to the islands. Then, with the Ukraine supporting Constantinople's independence, Büyükada, the largest island, set up a large field hospital. Thousands of wounded ended up at the hospital as possession of the city repeatedly changed hands. The hospital site was purchased by Evolution Clinics and became a more permanent structure. While the wounded became more of a trickle into Büyükada Hospital, the wealthy started arriving. Evolution Clinic's technical skills with cosmetic and delta-grade cyberware, combined with a luxury location and lax legalities, makes Büyükada Hospital an ideal location for the famous and infamous alike.

The smaller islands have been given various makeovers: Yassi's historical subterranean prison cells have been built up into a rather large facility, complete with anti-aircraft weaponry, while Kasik, Sedef, and Tavsan have tall condos overlooking a high wall.

The three islands are luxury places of exile, a return to one of their older uses. Corporate executives and wageslaves who have outlived their usefulness, but are too knowledgeable to kill or chance being picked up by competition, are sent here. They have all the core creature comforts in their gilded cages, with the exception of the ability to leave. That includes virtual movement—Matrix access is limited to prevent deckers from obtaining info from any local assets.

- You have two types of residents. First you have your political corporate exiles. These include voting members, CEOs, CFOs, and other three-letter executives who challenged and lost against their controlling rivals. Their golden parachutes airdropped them here. The second group is retirees who built important tools or software but are getting too old to keep up with the younger workers climbing the corporate ladder. Sure, they could be fired, but the retiree's knowledge is still viable for another five to fifteen years until the next tech overhaul. If something breaks on the legacy systems, the collected retirees can be called upon to fix it from the island.
- Cosmo

- Sounds like a lot of overhead.
- Slamm-0!

- Beats having martyrs. Or the expense of rebuilding. Besides, sometimes if an executive has enough clout, there can still be a coup to bring themselves back into good graces with the company, ending their exile.
- Thorn

Instead of a resort, Yassi Island looks more like a prison, as a third of the island is covered with a low, dark structure. Because of its proximity to the other islands, the anti-aircraft weapons have accidentally shot down passing drones. So far the only clear information about the structure is that it's a Saeder-Krupp facility with no ferry or flights onto the island. Speculation about the use of the island includes a private prison for CFDs, but more likely it's an R&D facility within reach of the new S-K HQ location.

- I assume someone made an underwater tunnel into the facility. That's what I would do.
- Sounder

- Or they just make night deliveries to the island. Other than the AA guns, security doesn't look obviously threatening.
- Rigger X

On the last little island, Sivriada, there was an attempt to build another walled condoplex, but Awakened dogs attacked and killed a dozen men who initiated the construction. Another crew came along with armed security and were able to kill the dogs. Months into the project, a larger pack of nastier dogs appeared, and the crew fled when the security team was

overwhelmed. Since then, many locals believe the island is cursed by the dog massacre there, and they claim the nasty dogs are the spirits of the original pack returned from hell. The half-built condos project from the island like dead trees, and construction equipment has become more rust than metal as the coastal spray has eaten away at them for years. Only the foolhardy attempt to land on that island.

- First blood dogs, then hellhounds. Who knows what will come next.
- Haze

- How they get to the island is another mystery. Some say they swim; I say that this is a confirmation that there are tunnels connected to the mainland.
- Plan 9

PLOT HOOKS

MURDER ON THE ORIENT?

Traveling the Orient Express is one of those unique enjoyments of a lifetime. For one S-K executive, it's just another business trip to deliver a prototype. The Orient Express is a relaxing way to transport it without having to fly. And there's only one stop, where the executive gets off the Express onto a private train—at a station beneath the Ejderha building.

For the players, that's ten hours nonstop on a luxury train in an attempt to relieve the executive of the prototype without him knowing. It's not exactly the prototype that Mr. Johnson is after, but the firmware that allows the prototype to connect to S-K's grid and the specific authority it provides. If the executive thinks he's been compromised, he can make a call to the office, and the firmware becomes invalid once used. Killing the executive on the train and taking the item would not be wise, as it's a luxurious and secure train going very fast, so there are not a lot of options for escape. The better option is an elaborate con to make the executive believe that he might have been compromised and the runners are the only ones who can help him.

GARIDO FELEM

Metatype: Dwarf
Sex: Male
Age: Young
Connection Rating: 2
Type: Transportation
Preferred payment method: Certified credstick
Hobbies/vice: Deepweed
Personal Life: Single
Background: Garido is one of a dozen carriage drivers to be found on the island. He and his horses are available for traveling the island. He is a very charismatic character and knows pretty much every bartender around the island—and a few on adjacent islands. Garido overhears a lot of gossip from his passengers. Getting some of that information out of him will require a payment to help him ease his conscience at violating his passengers' confidentiality.

DR. CATARINA CITFCI

Metatype: Human
Sex: Female
Age: Middle-aged
Connection Rating: 4
Type: Medical
Preferred payment method: Bank transfer
Hobbies/Vice: Knitting
Personal Life: Live-in partner
Background: Dr. Ciftci practices out of Büyükada Hospital. She is a cosmetic surgeon who specializes in bioware implants. It may be unusual for a woman to practice in Turkey, but several of her patients have known criminal ties, and no one wants to question her activities too deeply. She can help with a quick patch job, but that would only be for her friends. By appointment, she can integrate various bioware augmentations purchased by the client. If she's feeling nice, she might also take care of those crow's feet.

THE ARTFUL DODGER

From the shadier locations of the Grand Bazaar, corporate wage slaves are often separated from their money by cons and fakes. Artemis Dodge, also known as the Artful Dodger, has scaled up his cons with fake situations to extort money from corporate executives. The Dodger doesn't realize that the latest target was someone in Councilman Mohammed's pocket. That little stunt transferred the executive out of Constantinople, leaving one less contact for Mohammed to leverage.

Mohammed is livid and wants Kamil (head of the Grand Bazaar) to bring him Artemis' head on a plate (a tongue and hand won't do, as such things can be replaced and are not really signs of significant physical harm). Kamil doesn't want to kill such a talented person as Artemis, but he concedes that Artemis needs to be put in his place, as he's taken the game too far. He believes that by turning the tables on Artemis' extortion con, he might convince him to lie low and re-evaluate his work. If successful, this would give Kamil time to pacify Mohammed before something more drastic occurs, like a contract with the Grey Wolves on the Artful Dodger's head.

MAN IN THE IRON MASK

Rumors and stories grow and wither quickly on the Matrix. If they aren't debunked by some know-it-all Agent, they end up more like background noise to some new meme of Awakened cats or some other shiny. Mr. Johnson has sifted through the noise and is intrigued by a story about an executive living on the island of Tavsan. Retired executives living on the island are nothing new, but this one wears a full mask with an AR face. The mask is said to be secured and not removable by the subject. No one knows who this person is; they only know they've been living there for some time.

Some believe it's Samantha Villers; others say it's the real Damien Knight and that one of his impersonators has taken control. Sounds hard to believe, but given some cursory investigation into the rumor, Mr. Johnson wants to know who it is, and he will hire runners to find out. The island is a prison of exiles, with little Matrix access and few visitors. The runners will have to find a way onto the island, then find the anonymous person among the exiles living in the corporate condo/prison.

OSMAN THE BUTCHER

Osman the Butcher knows good meat. He runs a small restaurant by the Hocapasa mosque and serves Iskender kebap. Iskender kebap is very famous in Turkey, named after the original chef who created it in 1867. It's made with lamb raised on the thyme-covered slopes of Mount Uludag, which is a high-security area. These lambs are as high-priced as cows from the Kobe district in Japan. Lambs are purchased once a month and delivered via railway.

Osman orders his sheep alive to make sure that they are both healthy and legitimate Uludag lambs before butchering them. Osman had his apprentices waiting at the Marmaray station for this month's order. Unfortunately, the train car was empty. Somehow, someone pilfered the lambs while they were going through the Marmaray tunnel. While insured, time is of the essence to Osman in finding the sheep alive, otherwise it's no Iskender kebaps for a month, which would be bad for business. He wants the runners to track down who stole his lambs so he can slow-roast them on a spit.

PLAN 9 AND THE INFINITE MONKEYS

It is said that if you have enough monkeys hitting a keyboard, at some point in time they will write a script for *Hamlet*. As improbable as that might be, the same can be said for pretty much anything Plan 9 (or Plan 10) says with regard to his "true" conspiracy theories.

One day the runners meet with a Mr. Johnson in Yesilköy. Such a meeting is a little out of the way in this quiet village, but not unusual given the nearby location to the airport for an executive who is very mobile. Mr. Johnson's business has gotten more interesting in Constantinople, and he wants the runners to see whether his sources are legit. Before he can say any more, he is killed by the waiter. The runners become involved in a shootout with sleeper agents at the restaurant, who were awakened by some phrase that Mr. Johnson said.

To add to the players' discovery, MIT (Turkish Intelligence) was observing the runners and Mr. Johnson as they arrived. Whatever happened in the restaurant happened quickly, and things started to escalate, beginning with the tank driving out of the museum. The runners have to help MIT defuse the situation before it literally goes nuclear.

FIELD OF DREAMS

The Asian Suburbs have not fully recovered; most of the neighborhood is gecekondular. The Polis have been dealing with a rash of drug overdoses that have led them to franken-flora that these people have been smoking. The detective on the case has been told by the council that those drugs are being supplied further south, and that the Grey Wolves will handle the apprehension of the drug smugglers.

The detective, however, believes the source is much more local; through Kamil (the head of the Grand Bazaar) he hires the runners to follow a trail leading to Galata and ZIC's employees. The Polis can't make any arrests, but they can't really stop someone from torching the illegal farm either.

free your self

FROM THE ARTIST'S PERSPECTIVE

The team hauling my unconscious granddaughter toward a getaway car was not the team I hired.

"It's not them," I shouted over the roar of the speedboat. The Bosphorus Strait sprayed me in the face as I handed Newton my binoculars.

Newton grimaced and pulled the strap over his head, one hand guiding the wheel. He peered at the dock. "How do you know?"

A small pop and a whizzing sound came from their direction. "They're too short!" I dropped prone. "My team is full of trolls!" Newton dropped my binoculars and wrestled the controls, evading the gunfire.

We pulled up to a neighboring gangway. I leaped onto the decking and sprinted for the stairs. Two stairs at a time I raced, only to catch a whirlwind of exhaust in the car's wake.

I scanned the crowded street and darted toward a pair of tourists taking photos. I hopped aboard the man's moped.

"Hey!"

"Special Investigations. I'm commandeering this vehicle!" I flashed a badge before them, then sped after the car.

Newton took their moment of shock to leap aboard the woman's moped. "I'll bring it back!" he shouted.

The kidnappers sped down the narrow, busy street, but thanks to all the pedestrian traffic, we caught up quickly. I spotted two of them in the car. Maiden lay across the back seat.

"Look out!" Newton shouted.

Two simit carts, gleaming red and gold, pulled in front of us from side streets. The carts peeled us off the car, and our collision smelled of sesame and warm dough, motor oil, and pavement.

I coughed until I could talk. "Binoculars!"

Newton, tangled in dough rings and broken bikes, crawled into arm's reach. I snatched the binoculars and tried to focus.

"Nothing. They're long gone. Dammit!" I slapped the pavement, stinging my palm.

"What do we do now?"

"Shut up. I'm thinking." I rose and started an inventory of any injuries.

"Look, this was your idea. If this goes sideways—that's on you. I'm not going to jail for this little slitch."

I should mention here that Newton lacked a full picture of things. He was not aware that Maiden, Istanbul's sweetheart pop superstar and biggest act of Yalı Entertainment, is my granddaughter. He also didn't know that the sweetheart and I planned her kidnapping a week earlier.

Maiden leaned on the soundboard of her home studio, expression disgusted. "It's like I'm their pet or something. They're as bad as Mother!"

"They did fund your last tour." Framed platinum discs—relics of an age when music was physical—glittered in the sunlight streaming

BY C2 WRIGHT

through a wall of windows. The windows made the studio resemble a lacy snowflake from the shore.

"Maybe so, but when I get home and don't hear from anyone for weeks, I do my scheduled interviews, practice and workout sessions, I eat my scheduled meals . . . and that's it! And I'm so angry!" She knocked over a music stand.

"Why?"

"Because I'm bored and frustrated, and I can't have any chocolate because it's not my cheat day!"

"Peanut, I don't know what you expect when you want your employer's protection but none of the staff. Maybe you need a hobby. Or a chocolate bar."

She sulked, then slowly lifted her head. Her hazel eyes glittered with an idea, and a wicked grin crossed her lips. "Do you want to create a little drama and collect a lot of cash? I know one of my bodyguards who I bet you could rope into a ransom scheme."

I allowed Newton's vulgarity to pass, eager to maintain my cover as Maiden's bodyguard. "No one said anything about jail. Relax and help me think." I added the slightest magical augmentation to my tone making my suggestion an order to Newton's weak will. He paced, lost in thought.

His role in this charade was over, and the sooner I ditched him, the better. He could return to his miserable life guarding people he despised while I got some answers out of my network. I could multitask. I made sure Newton was looking away, and I dialed Smarmy.

"Uh, hi. I mean, hey, boss."

I cast a glance at Newton and held up my index finger. "All right," I said, as though I'd been asked a question.

"I've been meaning to call you. I've got, ah, some bad news."

"Oh, yes. Please go on." I lightened my tone with touch of excited anticipation.

"I—Is okay a good time? Because you sound a little suspicious ..."

"Yes, he's here too." Newton's eyes bulged. "*No*," I emphasized for Newton, "we haven't told anyone about it. Please, *go on*," I emphasized for Smarmy.

"I ... think I get it, sorry. So the ... job you wanted to pull? The girl we weren't supposed to hurt? Um, there's a problem—"

"We'll take care of it. I'll stay, and Newton can check it out. Send me details; we'll talk after I've had a chance to read them."

"Okay, boss." Smarmy sounded ill.

I turned to Newton. "That was my network. The license on that van matches to a shop in Avcilar; I told them you'd check it out."

"Where are *you* gonna be?"

"*I'm* gonna be interviewing all these irate shopkeepers and pedestrians in our wake. If you'd like to take my place, be my guest."

"Fine. Give me the address."

Once he left, I read Smarmy's message. Something had happened (for which he had a good explanation) that caused them to miss our rendezvous. By the time they arrived, we'd left. Probably crossing the Bosphorus by that time.

With Newton gone, I could follow up on the one clue I didn't fabricate: the White Lion symbol tattoo on the driver's hand.

The White Lion showed up in my city ten years ago. He had become a thorn in my side over the past year. I aspire to simplicity, and the White Lion complicates everything. I don't know him, have never seen him, but he seems bent on taking over my small (though thriving) business. So far I'd kept him at bay. It seemed those days were over.

A couple of hours walking down the Grand Avenue, Istiklal Caddesi, netted me a stealth tag planted inside the sleeve of one of the White Lion's plentiful gamers. He, the sweet boy, led me to a district I hadn't visited in two decades: Cihangir.

At a bench along a colorfully tiled bar in Cihangir, twenty-year-old Mother applied effects to her Matrix signature and tipped her head. "What do you think? I like this one."

I glanced, snorted, and resumed reading the news.

She waved a hand and dissolved the AR words and imagery—"Director Mother, Global Sandstorm" and a gray heron taking flight—into a small whirlwind of sand, which disappeared into the code. "Maybe it should have been a white heron. Anyway, I liked it," she mumbled.

"Don't be petulant, dear."

Mother's nostrils flared. "What does that even mean? I asked you to come look at my work and you call me 'petulant?'" She turned her bar stool to glare at me.

"You were being petulant." I avoided her gaze.

She closed her mouth with a click. "It's not 'petulant' to want to talk with your mother—"

"No?" I stood. "Okay, what do you want to talk about? Work? Life goals?" My volume rose. "Your next apartment, because, goodness! You're twenty and apparently going places," I shouted, "because you're too busy to stay here and work with your mother—"

"Work for my mother! And I am going places!" Mother shouted back. "I have a job with Global Sandstorm!"

I froze. My ears rang with the sudden silence. I saw something behind my daughter's eyes: it wasn't an empty threat.

"I leave next week for training. I was going to tell you, but . . . well, you never really listen anymore."

I slid a mask of cool detachment over my features and voice, praying the seams held. "I'm happy you've made up your mind. I'll hire movers tomorrow, and we'll make this an easy transition."

From one of my stashes throughout Istanbul, I grabbed a few plain articles that could fashion a passable uniform and pulled on a modest scarf, robe, and sunglasses. Adequately disguised, I left for the White Lion's den.

The closest transit stop dropped me off west of the front gates. I followed the street under the stone arches of the Valens Aqueduct. Stubborn trees growing between the street and the aqueduct clung to the ancient stones. Here, tucked back from the thicker arteries of traffic to the northwest, people treated the aqueduct like a patio. A backgammon table and five colorful folding chairs awaited the folk who would sit in these seats tomorrow morning. Folk who were now at home tending to their arthritis. I said a silent prayer that I wasn't in the same boat as my contemporaries as I slipped pads onto my hands and feet, tied up my robe, and padded up the stones. Once on the top, I belly-crawled toward the end overlooking the gated grounds of the White Lion's mansion.

Two guards manned the front: one at the gate, another at the house. A closer inspection with binoculars revealed they were armed with pistols and batons. A simple high stone wall surrounded the north and south ends of the house; tall iron fencing spanned the east and west. I've always been especially light on my feet; you could call me adept at this sort of movement. I knew I could make the jump, but after that crash, I hoped to avoid it.

The electric thrum of bass caught my attention. Below me, music drifted from a tiny pink car rolling under the arches of the aqueduct. The car pulled into the car park below me, and a girl, engaged in a loud conversation on her commlink, stepped out.

"Yeah, I'm here. No, I won't be home until late. They said the job includes clean-up." The girl hoisted a backpack and locked the car. "It's at the White House. No, it's on Büyük Karaman Street; I heard it used to be a university."

I could still hear her as I descended.

"Okay, look—okay. I really need to go, I'm gonna be late. Love you too, bye."

I pulled her into the alley beside the office building, one hand pressed firmly over her mouth, the other pressed a tranquilizer patch onto her cheek. She dropped.

"I'm sorry, honey," I said, examining her clothes. Masking muted the evidence of my magic. My clothes and my face shifted to match the girl's. In moments, I wore a red coat, white shirt, khakis, and a thirty-year-old's complexion. I grabbed the girl's bag, hauled her back to her car, double-checked my disguise, and locked her safely inside.

I kept my head down as I passed the guard at the gate.

"Wait, Sanem?" he said.

I turned with a quizzical smile.

"Yes, he said you'd be wearing a red coat." The gate guard nodded across the lush grounds to the house entrance, where a bearded guard stood speaking with a house guest. "Your Padraig scored door duty tonight. He's excited to see you." The gate guard smiled at me.

I returned his smile, sure he would not notice my breath catch in my throat. "Excuse me, please, I seem to have left my handbag in the car—"

"Oh, don't worry. You can't bring bags in anyway. House rules. I'm sure you understand." He held out his hand for my backpack, which I handed over with a nod. I prayed my cleaner-upper was on the up-and-up while he pawed through the bag. He raised his eyebrows, and his mouth twitched. He yanked out a shopping bag and handed it to me, closed the backpack, and waved me through without another word, studiously focused on the street.

With the gate guard's back turned, and Padraig engaged in conversation, I took the opportunity to use a large fountain to block line of sight from the entrance and cast an invisibility spell. I darted inside a nearby shed, opened the bag, and discovered the source of the gate guard's odd behavior. I scowled and shook my head for my dear Sanem.

I cast and maintained the threads of a second spell and stepped outside. Maintaining invisibility, I approached the servant's entrance, meters from the main door and Padraig. I tugged at the threads of the spell in the shed, and one of a pair of magical hands

moved forward, pressing the power button on the wood chipper. The machine roared to life; Padraig and the guest started in surprise.

I dropped the spell. The second magical hand in the shed disappeared, and Sanem's exotic dancer's costume plummeted from its grasp into the machine's maw.

Padraig shooed the guest inside and dashed for the shed. I took the opportunity to slip through the servant's entrance. Once inside, I took a few minutes in the empty library to drop the invisibility and the facial sculpting to leverage whatever implied status I could milk out of being a sexagenarian.

I had to find where they kept captives. Probably down a level.

An elegantly dressed woman stepped into the library. She carried a champagne flute and wore a fur stole over her elbows. Her gaze flowed over me as she scanned the room. I was as unimportant as the furniture. She turned toward the doorway and froze. Her gaze fell upon me like iron filings pulling toward a magnet.

"What in the hell are you doing here?"

I shrunk and addressed the floor as any proper servant should. "My apologies, madam, I don't understand."

My comment was met with silence and I risked a glance. The planes, angles, and coloring of her face shifted before my eyes. It looked painful. In a moment, the elegantly dressed stranger was my daughter. Twenty years older, yes, but just as lovely. The same cold fire burned in her green eyes.

"I said what in the hell are you doing here?"

I stared. "It's a job," I managed finally, angry with myself for the lapse.

Her eyes narrowed. "I'll bet it is."

"Well," I sputtered, "What the hell are *you* doing here?"

"What do you mean, 'What am I doing here?' This is my house!"

The call came in the small hours. I fumbled for my commlink and murmured something akin to greeting.

There was only sobbing.

I sat up in bed. "Who is this?"

"It's me, Anneanne." Maiden sniffled. "I'm sorry to call you late. I didn't know who else to talk to."

"What's wrong, Peanut? Are you okay?"

She sobbed some more, then growled. "Ah, she's such a–" she bit short a curse and growled again. "I'm okay, it's just a bad fight."

"Tell me what happened."

She told me about the argument, how she left in a rage from the house they shared, and I listened. When she could hear, I told her how her mother had left my house like that at her age, too.

She sobbed harder, which saddened me. She murmured something about the circuitry of life being a little overwhelming.

I said we all need moments like that once in a while. I let her have hers, and once the tears tapered, she thanked me for listening.

I asked her how long they had been dating before the fight.

There was a long pause. "I'm sorry?"

"Well, not after your fight, but tell me about the good parts. Unless you'd prefer not to." I laughed, self-consciously. "I'm sorry. I'm not very good at this mothering thing yet."

"Have I told you where I've been living, Anneanne?"

"No, and I don't pry."

"They call it the White House. It's nice. It used to be a university. I have some friends here."

I gaped. "You ... are the White Lion?!"

"Do you mean I actually pulled one over on you? Ha!" Her laugh echoed off the shelves. "I was sure you knew by now!"

"What happened to Global Sandstorm?"

Her eyes narrowed. "We thought it best if we went our separate ways."

"So you came home. Why didn't you come talk to me?"

"For another lecture? No. I have skills and some extremely expensive cyberware that have helped start my own business, thank you very much."

"Good grief, is that what this is all about?! I thought you had more sense than that. We can discuss it later, now where is she?"

"Where is who?"

"Maiden—where are you hiding her?"

Her mask of confidence cracked and she studied me. "Don't try that. I know you're the one who has her!"

I opened my mouth to argue when Maiden stepped into the room, smiling brightly. "Mother! Anneanne! I'm so glad you could make it!"

"What is going on?" I glanced between Maiden and Mother, but Mother appeared as shocked as I felt.

"Come with me. We're serving drinks and meze."

Maiden waved us forward and into an adjoining lounge. Meze—stuffed grape leaves, breads, pickles—beer and raki lined the bar. "In answer to your question, I have a business proposition. I'm so excited—"

"Back up," I interrupted. "If this was a ruse, explain why someone shot at me. Dear."

"Just capsule rounds of narcoject. Now listen: We've been working at odds for some time. I want you to realize we could achieve so much more if we worked together."

"'*We've* been working?'" Mother spat. "How have *you* worked? The last I saw was a spoiled child complaining of boredom."

Maiden smiled. "Of course I've worked: I've watched, and I've learned that when dealing with information, the one who handles the honey gets to lick her fingers once in a while."

"Explain." Mother's eyes blazed.

"I'm trying—"

I interrupted again. "What about Smarmy and the others?"

"Yes," Mother jumped at the question. "What about my team? Bailey and Hawk?

"Let's see ..." Maiden ticked off on her fingers. "Smarmy: led on a wild goose chase, Bailey: bribed, Hawk: drugged. You know what? You really should give Hawk a raise. We couldn't budge him with bribe or threat."

"Drugged?!"

"Oh don't worry, Mother, he'll just wake up with a headache tomorrow. Now, no more distractions. I've gotten my education and my inspiration from you two. And you'll get this brain and wallet from me. What more could you want?"

"Trustworthiness," I said.

At the same time Mother said, "A little heads-up would have been nice."

Maiden smiled. In the moment she looked so like her Mother that my heart broke remembering two so similar but so different little girls, twenty years apart, before we all became lionesses.

"I'm committed to making this work." She looked between us. "And I'm stubborn."

I met my daughter's eyes, saw guarded agreement behind them.

"We're listening."

ALIBI AGENTS OF CONSTANTINOPLE

SAMA ÇIKAR

For hundreds of years, tradition kept women away from participating in the Dervish tradition. Just after the Awakening, that began to change, at least in Istanbul. In 2015, women started to become accepted as whirling dervishes among Mevlevi Sufis. Fifteen years later, Sama Çıkar was among the second generation of women allowed to perform the *dance of the sema*, or the Whirling Dervish. As Sama danced, she excelled beyond what had been possible among her forebears. Spinning longer and faster not only brought Sama closer to Allah but awakened in her a latent physical adept ability. Many, even Sama for a while, thought her abilities manifested because she was an elf, due to first-generation elves still being misunderstood.

- If this was in the '30s, it must have been extra confusing for the lass. No one understood what physical adepts were until much later.
- Thorn

In the time since her abilities awakened, Sama has not only surpassed her teachers, but she now leads a group of awakened Mevlevi dancers, and she blogs about the spiritual insights she gains while dancing. The group Sama formed is called the Awakened Lovers of Mevlana. They perform all over Istanbul, mostly in halls or lodges, but are known to dance for special cultural or national events as well. Within the ALM, there is another, more secret group. Sama has handpicked a number of Awakened female adepts that she has trained beyond the dance of the sema. Sama has perfected the use of adept whirling as an offensive weapon to be used on those who deserve it. These women are taught the dance of adalet (justice), given the name *Kasirga*, and sent out each night to protect women and children on the streets of Constantinople. The public believes Kasirga to be only one person, and this furthers the symbol that Sama wishes to create, as it creates fear in those who wish to do evil to the sprawl's most vulnerable citizens.

- No kidding? Kasirga is a bunch of religious slitches? Who would have thought? Even I was scared of Kasirga for a while.
- Haze
- You would do well to remain afraid.
- Am-Mut

As for Sama herself, there is a reason she sponsors this group of vigilante women. When elves first began appearing in the early part of the century, they were not an acceptable addition to Islamic life right away. Some of the more extreme leaders encouraged the devout to kill or exile those who carried "demonic" traits, like pointed ears. Of course, most of the Muslim world did not see it this way, but the leaders had their way. Sama was among those who were hunted and driven out of Constantinople. Surviving on her own was not easy. Every night brought new horrors as men stalked refugee camps, looking for those weaker to take advantage of. Sama refuses to speak about the worst she experienced, but whatever happened, it has attuned her to hear the cries for justice around her. And though Istanbul has become far more tolerant, justice for the orphans and widows is what she claims to hear when she listens for the voice of Allah through her dance.

SAMA ÇIKAR (ELF)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS	M
4	6	4	3	5	4	5	6	3	6.0	8

Condition Monitor	[illegible]
Armor	7
Limits	Physical 5, Mental 7, Social 8
Initiative	9 + 1D6
Qualities	Quick Healer
Skills	Blades 4, Disguise 6, Etiquette 4, Firearms 3, Intimidation 3, Leadership 6, Palming 5, Perception 5, Performance 8, Pistols 3, Sneaking 5, Unarmed Combat 4
Adept Powers	Attribute Boost (Charisma) 2, Authoritative Tone 1, Commanding Voice, Danger Sense 3, Facial Sculpt 1, Improved Reflexes 2, Kinesics 3, Kinesics Mastery, Nimble Fingers, Voice Control 2
Metamagics	Masking
Gear	Ace of Hearts armor clothing [7], autopicker (Rating 4), contacts (Capacity 3, w/ vision enhancement 3), fake license (magic, Rating 5), 3 x fake SINs (Rating 5), Hermes Ikon commlink (Device Rating 5), jammer (area, Rating 6)
Weapons	Sword [Blade, Acc 6, Reach 1, DV 6P, AP –2] Fichetti Security 600 [Light Pistol, Acc 6(7), DV 7S, AP +1, SA, RC (1), 30(c), w/ detachable folding stock, laser sight, gel rounds]

- Sama is one of my personal heroes. The culture under the previous Caliph and other Middle Eastern leaders in recent memory did not validate magic, metahumanity, or women. So even before I heard of Kasirga, Sama was an inspirational figure of a strong, Awakened, Muslim woman who formed the culture around her instead of being stomped down by it. While Istanbul has never been representative of the greater Muslim world, her presence there reached many of us who needed to see it.
- Goat Foot

BERRAK SENSOY

If you are looking for work while in Istanbul, Berrak Sensoy is the first guy you should look for. Sensoy's been a staple in the city since Constantinople's independence in '42, and the last few decades, he's been making a name for himself as a straight-shooting fixer for deniable assets. He is on the short list of people who can get you almost anything you need while in Constantinople. He is used to being overlooked as a dwarf, but he has an infectiously cheerful nature about him that makes you instantly at ease. Don't let that fool you, though. Behind his snappy clothing and cybereye, he is all business. Sensoy loves Turkey, but loves his city more. When Constantinople broke free from Turkey, there was never any doubt in his mind where he would stay.

- Berrak's network is legendary. Don't ask me why, but back in 2070, I needed a syringe full of barghest urine for a job I was on, and I needed it that night. Sensoy hooked me up in two hours. It cost me, sure. But a contact that can pull of the impossible like that is worth every penny spent.
- KAM

Sensoy likes to meet up with prospective clients and agents in the Istinye Park Shopping Center, one of Constantinople's largest shopping malls. You could have a meet with him every day for a few years and never meet at the same shop twice. He says you can never take too many chances, so it it's best to have many witnesses and many places for a dwarf like him to hide if things turn sour. And in Constantinople, things reliably turn sour, given time. The fact that he is still around, still at the top of his particular heap, and still not "important" enough to the corps or law to follow up on, is a testament to his skill in playing the game.

- Don't let the grey in his hair fool you. He's as cagey and agile as they come. At the first sign of trouble, he leaves the nuyen on the table and bolts for the nearest safe spot.
- Pistons

- It helps that he has safe rooms littered all around Istinye Park. Why do you think he likes meeting there so much? He spent a small fortune buying extra real estate behind the shops and doing construction in the mall corridors. Anywhere in the mall, there is a good chance he could be safely behind four meters of plasteel, watching on closed-circuit, within fifteen seconds of danger rearing its head.
- 2XL

- It seems unlikely that the shops would just let him get away with that. They must know that he has all of these rat holes everywhere.
- Turbo Bunny

- Two things. First, it is very likely that nearly every manager in the mall owes some sort of favor to Berrak. He sends people their way, he "takes care of business" for them if necessary, and half the time, they are his clients. But second, they all think they are the only ones that Berrak deals with. He is playing all of them like this guy I knew in high school who had a different girlfriend in every class.
- 2XL

One of Berrak's secret passions is arcanoarchaeology. One of his main sources of capital is connecting runners with groups like the Atlantean Foundation, the Apep Consortium, Wuxing, or the Draco Foundation in order to send them into the bowels of ancient ruins, looking for buried treasure. He has a knack for customizing runner teams to suit his clients' rather specific needs. That literally no one in Constantinople wants Sensoy dead tells you the economy of the sprawl finds him valuable. If you can get him to owe you a favor, it's worth his weight in credsticks.

- Berrak is the one who helped Apep smuggle that scarab artifact out from under the Hem'netjer a few months ago. Apparently, it was some sort of powerful ritual focus, but whatever it was, both Apep and the beetle mages wanted it bad. Turns out that some runners intercepted it in Seattle before Apep could grab it, but Berrak had done his part. He made a killing while also doing the world some good.
- Am-Mut

JINN

Jinn grew up as an elf in Constantinople. As both Sufis and elves, his family found that the city was a haven of tolerance for their race and beliefs compared to many of its neighboring states. Jinn grew to appreciate the diversity of his cosmopolitan home, growing more attached to culture and luxury as he grew. At an early age, he became fascinated with high fashion, and he became adept at navigating the Matrix, just to experience more of the culture he lacked. Seeing male and female models in outrageous clothing inspired him like nothing else.

BERRAK SENSOY (DWARF)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS
6	3	3(5)	5	5	4	5	5	5	4.7

Condition Monitor	11/11
Armor	8
Limits	Physical 7, Mental 6, Social 7[8]
Initiative	8 (10) + 1D6
Skills	Computer 3, Etiquette 5, Intimidation 4, Leadership 3, Longarms 3, Negotiation 6 (Bargaining +2), Palming 3, Perception 4, Pilot Ground Craft 3, Pistols 4
Augmentations	Cerebral booster 2, cybereyes [Rating 2, w/ flare compensation, image link, smartlink, vision enhancement 2, vision magnification] reaction enhancers 2
Gear	Armanté suit [8], fake license [firearms, Rating 6], fake SIN [Rating 6], jammer [area, Rating 6], Transys Avalon [Device Rating 6]
Weapons	Ares Predator V [Heavy Pistol, Acc 5(7), DV 8P, AP –1, SA, RC —, 15(c), w/ smartgun system] Defiance T-250 [Shotgun, Acc 4, DV 10P, AP –1, SS/SA, RC —, 5(m)]

- Are we serious, right now? Lately, it feels like JackPoint has become a treasure trove of unimportant crap. Why on earth do we need to know about some decker with a fashion fetish?
- Clockwork

- I guarantee that most of us have far more use for Jinn than we do for you. I've worked with him before. He's a sweet guy. That's rare in the shadows. Plus, he's one of the best deckers in Istanbul.
- Beaker

At age fourteen, Jinn attended a fashion show sponsored by Shiawase. There, a young Jinn met Empress Hitomi Shiawase. The empress was in Istanbul doing PR for Japan and Shiawase when she saw a photo opportunity and struck up a conversation with Jinn. Not knowing she was one of the most powerful people on the planet, Jinn blathered away about the latest fashions and hacking Matrix sites to view feeds from Milan. Curiously, this impressed Hitomi, who gave Jinn his first cyberdeck (before the new Matrix regulations) and offered him a job at Shiawase when he got older.

- Curiously, my hoop. There's more to Empress Hitomi than meets the eye. She used to be a runner before she married the emperor of Japan, called herself Lady Death. Her dad was CEO of Shiawase, and she was tutored by the AI Mirage. Afterward, she was revealed to be a technomancer. I am sure seeing a kid with Jinn's potential and setting him on his way into the shadows was completely unintentional …
- Bull

Jinn never forgot that meeting, and his love for fashion and decking now included a passion for Shiawase products. Jinn never did take the job offer at Shiawase, as he discovered his gift for hacking allowed him to make nuyen far easier than being a wageslave. He loves the finer things in life, and for him, that means superb fashion, Shiawase tech at his fingertips, and forcing the Matrix to do his bidding.

- Speaking of hacking, wasn't Jinn the one who almost got toasted by IC a few months ago? Doesn't sound like much of a wiz decker.
- Clockwork

- If you saw what he was up against, you wouldn't say that. The fact that he was able to bust into a host protected by both Global Sandstorm and S-K Matrix security, do his job, and then fight off the giant golden Matrix dragon of death while escaping with his life strikes me as fairly "wiz."
- Puck

- A contact of mine used to work for Mossad. She says this guy could be one of the best ever, but he spends all of his time hanging out with models and shopping at malls.
- 2XL

- Jinn is just plain yummy. Plus, have you seen his Matrix icon? He has wildly spinning genie with a tornado for legs. It's all red and purple with lightning shooting out. Gives me warm fuzzies.
- Kat o' Nine Tails

JINN (ELF)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS
1	6	2	1	5	7	6	4	3	5.6

Condition Monitor	10/11
Armor	7
Limits	Physical 5, Mental 9, Social 8(9)
Initiative	8 + 1D6
Qualities	First Impression, SINner (Corporate)
Skills	Automatics 2, Computer 5, Cybercombat 6, Cybertechnology 2, Electronic Warfare 6, Etiquette 3, Firearms 1 (Tasers +2), First Aid 3, Gymnastics 2, Hacking 7, Hardware 5, Perception 5, Software 6,
Augmentations	Cybereyes [Rating 2, w/ image link, low-light vision, vision enhancement 3, vision magnification], datajack
Gear	Erika Elite commlink (Device Rating 4), medkit (Rating 3), Nightshade armor clothing [7], Shiawase Cyber-4 cyberdeck [DR 4, 8 6 4 2]
Weapons	Ifrit Assault Rifle [Assault Rifle, Acc 9, DV 10P, AP –5, SA/FA, RC 1(2), 20(ml), w/ APDS ammo, longbarrel, personalized grip, shock pad, smartgun sysem, underbarrel weight] Yamaha Pulsar [Taser, Acc 5, DV 7S(e), AP –5, SA, RC —, 4(m)]

DERYA ASANI

A long time ago, Derya Asani did some simple math. Constantinople holds nineteen million people and hosts another eight million or so visitors per year. That's twenty-seven million people. If she somehow manages to scam 0.01 percent of the citizens and visitors to that vast city—one in 10,000 people—that would be 2,700 people. If she managed to scam a couple of people a month, that would last her for much longer than her lifetime would, and would make the chances of any of her marks running into each other low. Further, she decided getting a thousand nuyen or so per mark would at least keep her fed; and if she did more, so much the better.

That's just a sample of the methodical diligence with which Asani pursues her work. Sure, she's got the flamboyance a good con artist needs to pull off her work, but the discipline needed to lie low when she needs to lie low and pull out of a job when the mark gets suspicious. She's

also rigorous about her legwork, which means she knows the city as well as anyone. Whether it's the best way out of a business-class hotel after pulling a Badger Game or knowing what part of the Grand Bazaar to duck into after pulling a False Good Samaritan job, she knows the back ways, byways, and highways of the city—as well as who will let you hide in their stall/shop/home/hovel/whatever and who will scream bloody murder if you get within five meters of them.

- She's also conscientious about not working the same area too heavily, so her knowledge crosses pretty much the whole breadth of the sprawl and even into some suburbs. She's most likely, though, to know the middle-class or wageslave areas—upper class has too much security, while the truly poor don't have enough money.
- Goat Foot

Her diligent schedule along with her desire to not be noticed by doing the same thing over and over keeps her from settling into any single technique. She's developed a fortune-telling persona, Madame Meryem, who has operated in every bazaar the city has to offer, she'll get herself run over in just about any parking lot in town to run an insurance scam, and she'll even let a minor virus loose on some tourists' PANs and then make a quick buck fixing the problem. She's even started a fake law firm—with two or three different names, depending on circumstances—and has managed to convince a few people to put her on retainer.

Her appearance can adapt to a wide variety of circumstances. She is a simple human, and she can look like a tired, careworn middle-aged corp staffer, or a glamorous socialite, or a longtime barrens rat. Her face disappears into her role, and people have difficulty describing any particular distinguishing characteristic. They remember her voice, though—smooth, unhurried, and always engaged with whoever is talking to her. She makes her marks feel special, which has long been a quality of top-rank con artists.

- If she's got so many skills, why is she staying relatively small time? Why not move into some long cons and score a big payday?
- Mika

- Part of her calculation. She wants enough to put a roof under her head and survive without getting attention from anyone rich or powerful enough to set some serious attack dogs on her.
- Cayman

- Or she *is* working the big games, but she's clever enough to cover up any evidence connecting what she's doing to what we know about her.
- Thorn

DERYA ASANI (HUMAN)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS
3	4	3	3	6	5	6	5	5	5.3

Condition Monitor	10/11
Armor	8
Limits	Physical 4, Mental 8, Social 8
Initiative	9 + 1D6
Qualities	Blandness
Skills	Computer 3, Con 8, Disguise 5, Escape Artist 4, Etiquette 6, First Aid 3, Forgery 5, Gymnastics 4, Hacking 3, Impersonation 4, Locksmith 5, Longarms 3, Negotiation 4, Performance 5, Pistols 3, Running 5
Augmentations	Platelet factories, skin pocket, tailored pheromones 2
Gear	Actioneer Business Clothing [8], contacts (Capacity 3, w/ image link, thermographic vision, vision enhancement 1), Erika Elite commlink (Device Rating 4), 2 x fake SINs (Rating 2), 2x fake SINs (Rating 5), jammer (area, Rating 4), lockpick set, maglock passkey (Rating 5), medkit (Rating 2), Microdeck Summit cyberdeck (Device Rating 1, 4 3 3 1], 4 x plasteel restraints
Weapons	Streetline Special [Hold-out, ACC 4, DV 6P, AP —, SA, RC —, 6(c)]

UDAY "AZOTH" ANTAR

Uday "Azoth" Antar is likely not like anyone you have encountered before. Mostly, that is because of how few people there are like him. He is a devout Shi'a Muslim, and held quite a lofty position in the Iraqi regime before it was absorbed into the Arabian Caliphate. While the new Caliph seems more tolerant of Awakened folks than his predecessor, Uday decided he didn't want to take any chances. He hired a group of runners to extract him, and he has been living in Constantinople since.

Before explaining Azoth, it might be helpful to discuss magic and Islam. While most of the dialogue about magic and Islam in the Sixth World has focused on how evil magic is, the Muslim world has long debated whether magic is an acceptable practice. For the most conservative, especially under the previous Caliph, all forms of magic are strictly prohibited. In fact, in some places, even being Awakened is enough to get you arrested and killed. On the other hand, most secular and Sufi Muslims see magic and Awakened abilities as gifts from Allah to be used for good, like all other human abilities and resources. There is an entire spectrum between those two poles, and you can find the Muslims of the world somewhere in this spectrum.

- Goes to show how flexible religion is when it benefits those in power. I can't help but notice that when Ibn Eisa came on the scene, doing all kinds of miraculous stuff,

the Caliph was right behind him, even after some of the nastier truths began to come out.

- Red Anya

Among those who consider magic to be a gift, there are still strict rules for its use. There is illicit ("black") magic, and there is licit (permissible) magic. Illicit magic involves summoning spirits (although there are ways around this prohibition) and the use of magic outside of specifically licit uses. Licit magic falls under three categories: astrology, Qur'anic magic, and alchemy. Qur'anic magic is magic that invokes scriptures of the Qur'an as incantations. Since the Qur'an is of Allah, this cannot be evil. Astrology and alchemy are considered science, not technically magic, and therefore permissible. Which brings us to Azoth.

- That makes no sense. Unified Magic Theory shows that all magic is ultimately the same thing, regardless of what you call it. Plus, there is nothing scientific about astrology or alchemy. If there were, people who weren't Awakened could do it. But they can't.
- Winterhawk

- There are more things in heaven and earth, Winterhawk, than are dreamt of in your Unified Magic Theory.
- Old Crow

Azoth is an alchemist. Islam has a long tradition of alchemists, in fact. He spent most of his time in Iraq doing rather mundane things (mostly making sure the president had plenty of health potions, I kid you not), but in his spare time, he devoted himself to research and has become one of the world's foremost experts on ritual alchemy.

- Trust me, health potions were not the only things he was making. An entire runner team got killed last year breaking into the Presidential Palace because of the alchemical traps Azoth had set up throughout the building.
- Balladeer

Now, Uday (Azoth is the name he has been going by since he arrived in Constantinople) runs an odd shop in the Grand Bazaar. It is a place that you can get Qur'anic talismans (non-magical), reagents, licit spell formulas, halal and kosher ingredients—and if you know what to ask for, he'll sell you prepared alchemical spells before a run.

- I found him to be incredibly friendly. You'll know Azoth when you see him. His long black hair, long black beard, and long black robes are a dead giveaway.
- Elijah

- Yeah, he's friendly, all right. Right up until the point you cross him and you realize that "alchemist" is just a fancy way of saying "powerful-mage-that-can-destroy-your-whole-team-with-a-fireball-in-a-bottle."
- Cayman

UDAY "AZOTH" ANTAR (HUMAN, ISLAM TRADITION)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS	M
3	4	4	4	4	7	4	3	3	6.0	9

Condition Monitor	[illegible]
Armor	9
Limits	Physical 5, Mental 8, Social 6
Initiative	8 + 1D6
Qualities	Exceptional Attribute, Resistance to Toxins
Skills	Alchemy 7, Artisan 4 (Fashion +2), Assensing 3, Clubs 3, Disenchanting 4, Enchanting 5, Perception 4, Performance 2, Pistols 3, Sneaking 3, Spellcasting 5
Spells	Chaotic World, Cure Disease, Detect Life, Fireball, Heal, Increase Reflexes, Invisibility, Powerbolt Stunball, Stunbolt
Initiate Level	4
Metamagics	Centering, Fixation, Masking, Quickening
Gear	Armor vest (9), mage sight goggles, Renraku Sensei commlink (Device Rating 3)
Weapons	Extendable baton [Club, Acc 5, Reach 1, DV 6P, AP —]

TORERO

Columba Gamboa Riojas grew up on the streets of Madrid, Spain—and not the good streets. Seeing little hope in her future, she joined the military young and found that she had a mind for combat. A brilliant mind for it. Her body was just okay, but she thought that could be fixed. The problem with being smart is the difficulty in keeping it to yourself. After a relatively short career full of constantly questioning superior officers' judgments, she was reassigned to a desk.

Desk life was only bearable because she went home to the love of her life each night. Midas made her happy, and so she only missed combat when she felt lonely. When Midas was outed as a technomancer, a mysterious group had him kidnapped and sent Ghost-knows-where.

Columba didn't last a week before she quit and went looking for opportunities to use her skills to find Midas. Eventually, the trail led to an organization called Argus that peddled in intelligence. Breaking into an Argus facility in Madrid was easier than she thought it would be, but only because another group had the same thought on the same night. That group was made up of professionals. Columba wasn't a pro. Not yet. That's why, after discovering that Midas was dead, she ended the night catching bullets with her arms, legs, and torso. Thank-

fully for her, Picador and a few of her 77th Independent Rangers were making their exit. Columba got a pity lift to a street doc, but that's also how Picador took notice of her. Columba fit right in with the Rangers, and Picador saw in Columba someone with enormous potential who could be molded into a fierce ally.

- The old saying goes, "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned." Perhaps not. But the fury of a shadowrunner whose mentor and lover is geeked makes the former look tame. Picador is the latter. She was protégé to Matador, another shadowrunner and leader of the 77th Independent Rangers. When Matador was killed, she went a little … off. That's why she was at the same Argus facility. Pic found out Argus had her man terminated as well. Seems that like was calling out to like when these two met.
- Haze

- Seems you should keep your exposition and opinions to yourself.
- Picador

- I'm just glad that you don't think I had anything to do with Matador's death any longer. Hiding from you was getting difficult—and expensive.
- Thorn

After Columba recovered from her wounds and the installation of her chrome, Picador extended the invite to join the Rangers. Picador saw a kindred spirit in the younger woman and started calling her Torero, Spanish for "bullfighter," to honor her lost mentor and continue the tradition. Torero has proven invaluable to the 77th but has left Madrid behind and has settled in Constantinople. After every major operation, the 77th lies low for a year, resting, recovering, and spending their nuyen. Torero hasn't been able to rest, so most days you can find her at the A□rımak rooftop bar, overlooking the Golden Horn. She has all sorts of intel and is always looking to get into any kind of action that keeps her mind off of the past.

- Since she isn't gonna read this, I'll go on record that this report wildly undersells Torero's skill. She is a tactical prodigy. It's no wonder she didn't get along with her superiors. They were nowhere in her league. We've only been together for a few years, but she has saved my hoop more times than I can count. Along with her tactical prowess comes an almost eidetic memory, making her an excellent resource if you plan on doing any info gathering or B&E in Istanbul. Don't tell her I said so, or she'll be impossible to work with.
- Picador

TORERO (HUMAN)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS
4	4(6)	5(7)	3	5	6	5	3	6	2.3

Condition Monitor	10/11
Armor	12
Limits	Physical 5(6), Mental 8, Social 5
Initiative	10(12) + 1(3)D6
Skills	Blades 4, Escape Artist 3, Firearms skill group 5, First Aid 3, Gymnastics 4, Leadership 5, Locksmith 3, Pilot Aircraft 2, Pilot Ground Craft 4, Running 4, Sneaking 6, Swimming 2, Tracking 3, Unarmed Combat 4
Augmentations	Cybereyes [Rating 3, w/ flare compensation, image link, low-light vision, smartlink, vision enhancement 2], muscle toner 2, wired reflexes 2
Gear	Armor jacket [12], autopicker (Rating 4), bug scanner (Rating 4), ear buds [Capacity 3, w/ audio enhancement 1, spatial recognizer], Erika Elite commlink (Device Rating 4), fake SIN (Rating 3), grapple gun (w/ 100 m stealth rope, catalyst stick), maglock passkey (Rating 4), medkit (Rating 4)
Weapons	Savalette Guardian [Heavy Pistol, Acc 5(7), DV 8P, AP –1, SA/BF, RC 1 12(c), w/ smartgun system; BF requires Complex Action] SCK Model 100 [Submachine Gun, Acc 5(7), DV 8P, AP —, SA/BF, RC (1), 30(c), w/ folding stock, smartgun system] Survival knife [Blade, Acc 5, Reach —, SV 5P, AP –1]

ALI BASAR

It's said that one of the worst things to encounter in the shadows is an honest cop. In Constantinople, the exact opposite is true. At 1.8 meters tall and missing the top half of his right ear, the elf known as Detective Ali Basar first took to the Constantinople streets approximately ten years ago. Prior to this, no official record of him exists. Rumors persist about his past, ranging from him being a Turkish government agent, to a corporate plant in the Polis, to an escaped experiment. Whatever his past is, Basar isn't talking and is known to take exception to anyone who attempts to broach the subject, usually causing the inquirer great pain and/or expense. He is known to be somewhat bi-polar, coming off as calm and cool one minute only to fly into a rage another. But no matter his temperament, Basar likes to inflict pain.

While on the job, Basar quickly made his presence in the Constantinople shadows known, racking up a staggering amount of arrests and closed cases. In his first year, he was credited with breaking up at least four gangs and two smuggling operations, along with scores of arrests.

- Okay, there has to be something going on here—no copper is *that* bloody good.
- Chainmaker

- Like much of the world, Constantinople (or Turkey for that matter) is concerned less with the finer points of jurisprudence and more with results.
- Thorn

While *most* law enforcement officers make their cases and collars through dogged effort and relentless pursuit of facts and evidence, Basar takes a different approach and uses whatever methods he deems necessary. Terms like legality and due process are nothing but low-value suggestions. For Basar, results are all that matter. To date, Basar has a one-hundred-percent conviction record, with most coming from confessions.

The secret of his success is actually simple: he's an expert at coercion, extortion, framing, and blackmail, with a healthy dose of police brutality to round things out. If Basar wants or needs something, instead of trying to make someone into an ally, he finds something to use as leverage against them or just makes their life hell through harassment and intimidation.

- And what he can't find something himself, he strong-arms someone into finding it for him.
- 2XL

But his favored method is the classic sting. Often Basar uses entrapment and then either trumps up the charges or plants incriminating evidence of a larger crime. If Basar is feeling generous, he'll let the subject post bail on the spot and release them with no charges filed. When he wants something else, Basar gives them the option of taking their chances in a Turkish holding facility ... or work for him.

- Basar has no known vices, no known weaknesses. He lives in a small apartment on the south side of Istanbul. He has no hobbies, no known family, and no known ... life. I'm not an expert, but from everything I've scanned on this slag, his sole reason for doing this is that he gets off on wielding the power he has.
- Netcat

- Merc chum of mine crossed paths with Basar when he was on leave. He decided to go have some fun at a local house of ill repute when out of the blue, Basar busts in and arrests him. Turns out that he needed someone with demolitions knowledge to do a little job for him. My chum did it, but was double-crossed when Basar arrested him for the job, and he went to prison anyway. He died three days later under mysterious circumstances. I'm surprised that no one's tried to take him out.
- 2XS

- He knows where a lot of skeletons are. Besides, his numbers make his superiors look good. Although a few have tried, no one's been able to seal the deal. There are rumors that he's saving up for some serious upgrades to combat encroaching age. Might also explain his behavior and where his income goes.
- Balladeer

ALI BASAR (ELF)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS
4	4	3(4)	5	6	4	4	3	4.65

Condition Monitor	10/11
Armor	11
Limits	Physical 6, Mental 7, Social 5
Initiative	9(10) + 1D6
Qualities	Photographic Memory, SINner (Corporate limited), Toughness
Skills	Automatics 4, Clubs 3, Computer 2, First Aid 2, Intimidation 5, Perception 4, Pistols 5, Sneaking 3, Tracking 4
Augmentations	Cyberhand (left, obvious, w/ shock hand), dermal plating 2, reaction enhancers 1
Gear	Armor vest [9], contacts (Capacity 3, w/ image link, vision enhancement 1, vision magnification], ear buds [Capacity 3, w/ audio enhancement 1, spatial recognizer], jammer (area, Rating 3), medkit (Rating 3), restraints (metal), Sony Emperor commlink (Device Rating 2)
Weapons	Colt Government 2066 [Heavy Pistol, Acc 6, DV 7P, AP –1, SA, RC —, 14(c)] Sap [Club, Acc 5, Reach —, DV 7P, AP —] Uzi IV [Submachine Gun, Acc 4(5), DV 7P, AP —, BF, RC (1), 24(c), w/ integral folding stock, laser sight]

AYLIN

Even in the jaded Sixth World, people still lean toward certain convictions, one of them being that children are helpless victims of a harsh and uncaring world and that they need protection and shelter from adults to preserve their inherent innocence. But as the old saying goes, there's a sucker born every minute. And for every sucker, there are three people waiting to take advantage of them. The gang leader known only as Aylin is one of those on the prowl, and the biggest weapon in her arsenal is misconceived perception.

At first glance, Aylin looks like yet another Turkish street waif—messy unkempt hair, clothes that are ill-fitting and ragged in places, dirt and grime covering her olive-complexioned skin, and to top it all off, strategically placed (not to mention dirty) bandages complete with blood stains. It's usually enough to make most metahuman hearts feel for her and then drop their guard.

- Heh, fragging idiots. I think I'm gonna like this. I like hearing about people who prey on the stupid.
- Clockwork

And that's exactly what Aylin wants. Most don't realize that this human girl who looks like she's no more than eight years old is actually almost thirty. The exact reasons for her appearance are largely unknown, but Aylin has been taking advantage of her looks for more than ten years. Because she is known to make extensive use of physical disguises, there is no accurate physical description of Aylin other than she is about the height of an average dwarf.

Aylin's early life matched her current persona—she grew up mostly on the streets. One bit of anecdotal evidence suggests that at some point, Aylin became a courier for various criminal bosses, which is where she initially learned most of her current skills.

Eventually, she graduated from delivery work to outright thievery. In this phase, Aylin would lure her target into a prepared area and then spring a trap of some kind. Most of the time, she would only rob their target and leave them with a few extra bruises or cuts.

As she became more proficient, she expanded into assaults and, in some cases, wetwork. But after a run-in with a local mercenary that almost got her killed, Aylin reportedly decided that she needed others to do most of the work for her. Soon after that encounter, Aylin began recruiting legitimate street children, offering them a means of survival on the brutal streets of Istanbul. She began to turn them into her own little army.

Fancying herself a general, Aylin continues to target hapless individuals, except this time her lures and ambushes are much more elaborate. The body count has also begun to rise as word of Aylin's gang has started to make the rounds.

- This is also unfortunate, because children are sometimes being mistook for members of Aylin's gang. The lucky ones are merely beaten. The unlucky ones are shot, or worse.
- Goat Foot

And despite the dangers they face on a daily basis, Aylin's gang are fanatically loyal to her, often saying that she's the only reason they're alive. It's unknown exactly how she commands such loyalty, but members of her gang that've been captured have flatly refused to speak about her, one going so far as to commit suicide rather than talk. Efforts by local police and security forces to subdue and eliminate Aylin's gang have proven fruitless.

- Last year, a friend and fellow reporter was working on an exposé of Constantinople's criminal elements. Yeah, bad idea, I know, but according to some of the notes he sent me, Aylin's gang does a lot of favors for the local crime bosses, who in return offer them protection from the law and a good deal of logistical support. One file stated that the gang received as a gift a gross of imported Swiss chocolate bars along with several crates of assorted toys. Guess we know one way Aylin ensures loyalty.
- Sunshine

- And those who defy Aylin usually end up in a human trafficking market or on an organlegger's table. Either way, she still profits.
- Goat Foot

AYLIN (HUMAN)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS
2	5	4(5)	2	4	5	6	6	5.3

Condition Monitor	9/10
Armor	6
Limits	Physical 4, Mental 7(8), Social 8
Initiative	10(11) + 2D6
Skills	Computer 2, Con 7, First Aid 3, Forgery 3, Longarms 4, Palming 5, Perception 5, Pistols 4, Sneaking 5, Tracking 3
Augmentations	Mnemonic enhancer 1, skin pocket, synaptic booster 1
Gear	Ace of Wands armor clothing (Lightly Used) [6], Erika Elite commlink (Device Rating 4), keycard copier (Rating 5), medkit (Rating 4), fake SIN (Rating 4)
Weapons	Ares Light Fire 70 [Heavy Pistol, Acc 7, DV 6P, AP —, SA, RC —, 16(c)] Remington 950, Acc 7, DV 12P, AP –4, SS, RC —, 5(m)]

JAMAL EL SID

Constantinople's Grand Bazaar is known for its wide variety of delights and merchandise. But sometimes it's difficult for the non-Turkish native to know exactly where to go for the best deals or the best places to visit, or what potential pitfalls to avoid. Thankfully, the weary traveler need look no further than Jamal el Sid.

Standing at a massive 3.5 meters tall, this troll of Turkish-Spanish ancestry is a well-known tour guide. Of course, between his height and his trademark ruthenium polymer clothing, it's difficult for him *not* to be known. Those who take up his offer as *guide extraordinaire* embark on a whirlwind journey aboard his modified open-air tour bus to explore the wonders of the Grand Bazaar.

- Oh my ghost! I *love* Jamal! The band and I took one of his tours last year when we were passing through on our way to Hong Kong. And no kidding about that coat, he's like a walking jumbotron! Part of his shtick is to pick out

obvious tourists in the crowd then project their images on his chest to get their attention. Then he offers his services. Pretty wiz if you ask me.

- Kat o' NineTails

That's he wants the tourists to think. In actuality, Jamal's tour is a minor scam designed to part naïve tourists who don't know any better from their money. The so-called wonders and delights Jamal treats his patrons to are nothing more than second-rate yet heavily camouflaged tourist traps.

The food is usually sub-par, drinks are watered down, and the merchandise is definitely of questionable origin and/or quality. But thanks in no small part to Jamal's phenomenal showmanship and sheer enthusiasm, no one seems to care. And when the tour is over, everyone usually walks away happy. While most travelers with two neurons to rub together are quickly able to recognize Jamal's tour for what it is, over the past few years it has gained a small cult following. Every year more and more travelers seek out this wonderfully campy tour.

However, things change when the sun goes down. By day Jamal acts the part of a clown, but at night he trades in his flashy R-P suit and quaint tour bus, dons one of his many tailored suits, and roars down the streets on a classic, heavily modified Harley Scorpion. The Jamal that everyone knows and loves becomes El Sid, one of the biggest fixers and information brokers in Istanbul.

- Like Kat, I took one of Jamal's tours to kill some time before a meet, and it was pretty much what I expected it to be; even got sick from some bad tuzlama soup. Thankfully I was able to pull it together for my meet. And imagine my surprise when I again met Jamal, this time as El Sid. The sharp contrast between the two was amazing. Jamal was goofy and funny, while El Sid was pure professional and sharp as a monoblade. Just goes to show, no matter how far you travel, there's always something else to see.
- Traveler Jones

- If you're looking for work in Istanbul, El Sid is one of the best fixers to do business with. Even though he's only had his current position for about two years, he's built a solid rep and is known to treat his associates with respect, provided they don't try to hose him over.
- Picador

- Okay, I'll bite. What happens if someone tries to hose him over?
- Kane

- First, he's an adept. Second, he's a semi-retired merc; 10,000 Daggers to be precise. And before anyone asks, yes he's a member in good standing of the Brotherhood of the Crescent. So what do you think?
- Picador

JAMAL EL SID (TROLL)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS	M
9	5	5(7)	8	[illegible]	4	[illegible]	4	4	[illegible]	1

Condition Monitor	[illegible]
Armor	[illegible]
Limits	Physical 10(11), Mental 6, Social 7
Initiative	10(12) + 1D6
Skills	Computer 3, Con 2, Etiquette 4, Firearms skill group 5, Gymnastics 1, Negotiation 6, Performance 4, Pilot Ground Craft 5, Running 2, Sneaking 3, Tracking 5, Unarmed Combat 4
Adept Powers	Adrenaline Boost 2, Combat Sense, Enhanced Perception 2, Improved Ability (Pilot Ground Craft), Improved Reflexes 2, Mystic Armor 2
Gear	Actioneer business clothing (w/ ruthenium polymer coating) [6], contacts (Capacity 3, w/ smartlink, vision enhancement 2), fake SIN (Rating 4), Renraku Sensei commlink (Device Rating 3)
Weapons	Colt Government 2066 [Heavy Pistol, Acc 6(8), DV 7P, AP –1, SA, RC —, 14(c), w/ smartgun system] Ingram Smartgun X [Submachine Gun, Acc 4(6), DV 8P, AP —, BF/FA, RC 2, 32(c), w/ gas-vent 2, integral sound suppressor, smartgun system]

"HONEST" ERNST LANG

During his tenure as a combat rigger for MET2000's Ninth Armored Group, Ernst Lang was known for many things: his skill at the controls of his Centurion hover tank, his cool under fire, his willingness to literally drive into the thick of combat to save his fellow soldiers, and his insane luck at being able to survive it all. But when he wasn't tearing up the battlefield, Lang was the biggest grifter MET2000 had ever known.

Aside from his primary duties as a vehicle rigger, Lang was also his unit's logistical specialist. When the unit needed something they couldn't get through standard channels, Lang took it upon himself to use varying alternate means to ensure his unit had the provisions they needed. And if this meant bending the rules almost to the breaking point or even bypassing them entirely, then so be it. Lang's actions usually meant the Ninth was flush with necessary material such as ammo, gear, and replacement parts. The Ninth was also usually flush with a lot of non-standard items. This made Lang very popular among the rank and file.

- "Non-standard items" is military jargon for contraband, by the way.
- Hard Exit

That all changed when MET2000 was deployed to Central America. Even among the chaos and carnage

that was the Az-Am War, Lang still created a considerable network of contacts to further his logistical conquests or enact one of his various get-rich-quick schemes. Again, because of Lang's efforts, the Ninth operated in relative luxury compared to the other armored groups.

Then, of course, it all went to drek.

Despite heavy fighting in mid-2073, MET's Logistics Command refused to issue critical anti-armor rockets to the Ninth, calling the equipment "unnecessary." Forced to turn to a black-market fence, the deal went south and caused the death of two Ninth troopers; Lang barely escaped. No longer willing to deal with Lang's antics but deciding not to give him the boot, Lang's superiors instead forced him to spend the remainder of his contracted tour in—of all places—Logistics Command.

But instead of this being a humiliating demotion as intended, Lang instead became an even better logistician, firing off requisition forms and charging through paperwork like he was still piloting a panzer. With his scams seemingly ended, Lang cashed out of MET2000 two weeks after the end of the war in Central America.

A week later, twelve of the Ninth's prized Stonewall battle tanks went missing. Two weeks after that, both the Stonewalls and Lang were both spotted in Morocco. From there, the Stonewalls went to parts unknown in southern Africa, while Lang and his heavy credstick were on their way to Constantinople, where both went to work. Currently, Honest Ernst, as he's now known, is regarded as one of the best mil-spec appropriators in the region.

- That's not all. Before leaving, Honest Ernst left a little program in Logistics Command's systems. It would randomly change the last number of every fourth part ordered or requisitioned. One can imagine what kind of chaos that one little thing caused. I heard this went on for six months before someone finally caught on.
- Picador

With a roguish charm, easygoing nature, and rugged Polish-influenced Germanic features, Lang has no trouble finding and making friends wherever he goes. Even when he's taken someone for all they're worth, people still seem have a hard time staying mad at them. This is usually because while he may rob someone one day, he gets them involved in a profitable deal a week later ... and then scams them again. And no matter what he does, he manages to never outright lie.

Honest Ernst works out of a non-descript coffeehouse/front located in the middle of the Grand Bazaar. When not sipping expensive coffee he's usually out and about, cruising around in one of his many vehicles, checking in with his contacts or working the angles. And while he specializes in obtaining and fencing mil-spec equipment, he's more than happy to consider just about any other profitable opportunity that just happens to come his way.

- Except wetwork. Cheat and steal, sure. But he draws the line at killing—except in self-defense, of course.
- Goat Foot

"HONEST" ERNST LANG (HUMAN)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS
4(6)	6	4(5)	4	4	3	5	3	4	1.3

Condition Monitor	10/10
Limits	Physical 6(7), Mental 5, Social 4
Initiative	9(10) + 2D6
Qualities	Gearhead
Skills	Blades 4, Con 5, Engineering skill group 4, Firearms skill group 5, First Aid 3, Forgery 4, Gymnastics 3, Negotiation 3, Palming 3, Perception 4, Pilot Aircraft 4, Pilot Ground Craft 5, Pilot Watercraft 4, Running 2, Sneaking 3, Unarmed Combat 4
Augmentations	Bone lacing (aluminum), control rig 3, cybereyes [Rating 3, w/ flare compensation, image link, smartlink, thermographic vision, vision enhancement 2, vision magnification], reaction enhancers 1
Gear	Armor jacket [9], Vulcan Liegelord RCC (Device Rating 5)
Weapons	Onotari Arms Violator [Heavy Pistol, Acc 5(7), DV 7P, AP –1, SA, RC 1, 10(c), w/ advanced safety system, smartgun system, safe target system base] Yamaha Raiden [Assault Rifle, Acc 6(8), DV 11P, AP –2, BF/FA, RC 1, 60(c), w/ integral sound suppressor, smartgun system]

GÖKER CANDEMIR

The Peter Principle applies in crime just as much as it applies in business. The skills that make you good at one level of the operation don't necessarily apply to the next level up, so people who were excellent pickpockets or shakedown artists become mediocre capos, since nimble fingers and huge chest muscles have very little to do with your ability to keep tabs on people and make sure they're doing their jobs.

Göker Candemir proves the reverse is sometimes true. He was skilled as a street operative, particularly when it came to punching people the mob wanted punched. Still, when he was selected to move up to head a crew, there was some surprise in the mob. Muscle doesn't get pushed ahead much, because people don't associate punching with management, but once Candemir had leadership of a crew, he proved surprisingly capable. He was good to his people, keeping close tabs on them while seeming like he was looking out for and taking care of them, and when hard conversations needed to be had, he had them, and he made them come out his way. He succeeded in the two main jobs a street captain should pull off—he kept the operation

profitable, and he short-circuited any trouble before it bothered the higher-ups.

- Candemir understands the art of the protection racket. If you're unsophisticated, you make it clear that the protection money people are paying you is keeping you from trashing their joint. If you're good at your job, you find ways to make the mark feel like they're in the middle of a war zone, with threats on all sides, and the only thing keeping the peace is your presence. You're not extorting them; you're guarding them. And they're happy to pay, because that's how a good con works.
- Sunshine

Candemir moved up a little bit more in recent years, so that he oversees a handful of street crews, but the mob got smart enough to keep him there and not advance him anymore. His crews are moving smooth, his people like him, his communities respect him, and his enemies fear him. Everything's as it should be.

But competence brings special problems. In organized crime, competence makes you enemies—other street captains hate you because you might keep them from getting more power, and rival gang members hate you because you're getting in the way of their work. Plenty of people in the Constantinople underground have knives out for Candemir, but he has an unlikely ally—the Polis. Yeah, Candemir breaks several laws on a daily basis, but the blocks where he conducts business are calm and orderly, and the general populace seem content with his brand of outlawry. So when rivals come to break up any part of Camdemir's operations, they may well find the Polis running interference for him.

- The good news is that this protection requires an unusual amount of cooperation between the Polis and the mob. They're not blatantly stupid—don't think you're going to crack into a Polis host and find all sorts of paperwork detailing collaboration between the two groups—but the beat officers who work Candemir's territory have a

good deal of knowledge about how he works. If you can convince them that they should share with you, they might spill.

- Chainmaker

- Remember that this state of affairs has existed for Candemir for well over a year, yet the conflicts haven't affected Candemir much. Meanwhile, one of his rivals is a guy who used to be known as Big Erol and is now known as One-Eye Erol, and he is spoken of with pity instead of fear. Caution is the least of what you'll need against this guy.
- Red Anya

- Also note that Camdemir regularly carries thermite, and it has nothing to do with construction or demolition needs. His people love him; his enemies suffer.
- Picador

GÖKER CANDEMIR (ORK)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS
7	5	4(6)	8	5	4	5	4	3	2.6

Condition Monitor	12/11
Armor	9
Limits	Physical 9(10), Mental 6, Social 6
Initiative	9(11) + 1(3)D6
Qualities	Guts
Skills	Automatics 5, Clubs 4, Computer 3, Con 2, First Aid 3, Gymnastics 2, Intimidation 5, Leadership 5, Pistols 4, Negotiation 3, Pilot Ground Craft 2 (Motorcycles +2), Running 2, Sneaking 3, Unarmed Combat 6
Augmentations	Cybereyes [Rating 3, w/ image link, low-light vision, smartlink, vision enhancement 3, vision magnification], wired reflexes 2
Gear	Actioneer Business Clothing [9], Erika Elite commlink (Device Rating 4), medkit (Rating 2), tag eraser, thermite burning bar
Weapons	Ares Predator V [Heavy Pistol, Acc 5(7), DV 8P, AP –1, SA, RC —, 15(c), w/ smartgun system] Ingram Smartgun X [Submachine Gun, Acc 4(6), DV 8P, AP —, BF/FA, RC 2, 32(c), w/ gas-vent 2, integral sound suppressor, smartgun system]

"LADY OF THE THREE NIGHTS"

Of all the various local legends of Constantinople, none is more elusive than the individual known only as "The Lady of Three Nights." Virtually everything known about her, including if she is in fact a real person, is complete rumor and conjecture. But those who have encountered her call her either a devil seductress or an angel of mercy.

The Lady, as she is usually referred to, first started making her rounds of the Constantinople social scene about ten years ago. Her unearthly beauty draws attention wherever she goes, and based on her expensive attire, she seems to want for nothing. She enjoys the company of wealthy and powerful individuals—men or women, it does not matter.

At first no one paid attention—after all, Constantinople is not without its share of beautiful women. But then certain events started to occur among the wealthy and powerful in the sprawl. It started with Hans Weiss, an executive VP of Saeder-Krupp's regional office. He was reported missing for three days, during which time all of his personal finances were drained. He was eventually found just outside the Grand Bazaar with no memory to what had happened to him over the past three days.

- Oh, the same Hans Weiss who was secretly financing a metahuman trafficking ring? That drek stain?
- Red Ayna

Eventually, similar things were happened to other affluent and influential individuals. They would disappear for exactly three days and three nights, then reappear on the fourth morning. Those who had great wealth were suddenly paupers, while those with political or other power had their most devastating secrets revealed, which in turn cost them that power. No matter their former status, they were effectively ruined.

Of course investigations were launched, but they ultimately went nowhere. Descriptions of the Lady vary wildly. Some say she is a lithe elf with long blonde or red hair; others say she is an ork of Turkish heritage, with long raven-black hair and exquisite features. The only consistent features among the many recollections are her eyes. The left one is as dark as the abyss, while the other is an almost otherworldly blue.

Reports of the Lady have decreased in the last few years, but every so often another victim is found wandering the Grand Bazaar, missing three days, unable to remember anything but a mismatched pair of beautiful eyes.

- I was actually hired to try and track down this Lady. I got close, once. I remember those eyes. Then I woke up in a Turkish bath house, in the middle of the best massage of my life. Thankfully all of my gear—and credsticks—were intact. I took the hint and the next flight out. Still, the memory is a pleasant one.
- Sticks

- Something this write-up fails to mention: Often times, those who suffer under or at the hands of The Lady receive a boon of some kind. For example, several of

Herr Weiss' victims (or their families) received certified credsticks with an average balance of 100K apiece. Take that for what you will, but I think there is something more going on with the Lady.

- Sunshine

"LADY OF THE THREE NIGHTS" (ISLAM TRADITION)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS	M
3	6	5	2	6	4	5	7	6	6.0	10

Limits	Physical 4, Mental 7, Social 9(10)
Qualities	Exceptional Attribute (Charisma), Focused Concentration 5, Spirit Affinity (Air)
Skills	Assensing 5, Banishing 4, Con 4, Etiquette 4, Exotic Ranged Weapons (shooting bracers) 4, Gymnastics 4, Intimidation 4, Leadership 5, Negotiation 4, Perception 5, Pistols 3, Running 2, Sneaking 8, Sorcery skill group 7, Summoning 6, Tracking 5
Spells	Analyze Magic, Analyze Truth, Blast, Chaotic World, Clout, Confusion, Control Actions, Detect Individual, Detect Magic, Fashion, Gecko Crawl, Heal, Improved Invisibility, Increase Reflexes, Influence, Knockout, Mist, Mob Mind, Shape (concrete), Shapechange, Silence, Stunball
Initiate Level	5
Metamagics	Absorption, Centering, Flexible Signature, Masking, Shielding
Gear	Moonsilver armored clothing [7], power focus (dark contact lens, Rating 5)
Weapons	Tiffani Elegance Shooting Bracers [Shooting Bracers, Acc 5(6) DV 7P, AP —, SS, RC —, 1(b)]

BORN TO TALK YOUR WAY OUT OF TROUBLE

LIFE MODULES

Below are some Life Modules for use with the Life Module character creation system (p. 65, *Run Faster*) to make your own con-experienced characters. These Life Modules are meant to provide extra flavour for creating charismatic characters good at wagging their tongues to get what they want.

FORMATIVE YEARS

BROTHEL CHILD

There's no two ways about it: Your mother was a whore. Literally. You were born to a prostitute mother who worked in a syndicate-run brothel. Such things aren't common, but they happen. Your mother, a strong earner, was allowed to keep you and her job, so long as you didn't get in her way. You heard many different languages spoken as your many aunts—the other prostitutes—lent a hand in your upbringing. They taught you to be polite and discreet, so as *never* to be seen by clients.

Attributes: Charisma +1, Willpower +1

Skills: Etiquette +1, Escape Artist +1, Sneaking +3, Pick any three Languages with 1 rank, Knowledge: Syndicate (pick one) +3

CON PROP

Your parents were con artists, and the best thing that ever happened to their con game was you. Having you around made everyone instantly drop their guard a notch—who would ever suspect two doting parents and their lovely child? Who wouldn't pay attention to a terrified child that had "lost his parents"? Add a cute animal or two into the mix, and you could distract with the best of them.

Attributes: Charisma +2

Skills: Animal Handling +2, Etiquette +1, Palming +2, Performance +2, Running +1

TEEN YEARS

THE EASIEST MARK

The most important part of a con is getting someone to trust you. Your parents trusted you. That suited you fine, because they never saw it coming. You sold out your parents, milking them for all they had. You were invincible, the best in the world—or at least, that was your own assessment. Sure, it wasn't all cake—staying under the law's radar had a steeper learning curve than you thought—but you managed. Sometimes you found yourself cold and alone at night, and unwelcome thoughts of your parents would creep into your thoughts, but what else should you have done?

Attributes: Charisma +1, Intuition +1

Qualities: Big Regret (-5), Wanted (-10)

Skills: Acting skill group +2, Forgery +3, Perception +1, Interest Knowledge: [Any] +3, Street Knowledge: [Any] +3

REAL LIFE

MR. JOHNSON

You are a professional Mr. Johnson. Your official title may be a euphemism like "resource adjuster" or "troubleshooting specialist" or even "accountant," but that doesn't matter. Your job is to be the line between civilization—your corporation—and the necessary evil of the wild men, the savages of the street. You know how to keep your cool, talk to shadowrunners, and come out ahead.

Attributes: Charisma +1

Qualities: Records on File (-1) [pick a Megacorporation]

Skills: Influence skill group +3, Intimidation +1, Perception +1, Pistols +2, Street Knowledge: Runner Hangouts +3, Street Knowledge: [Pick a megacorporation] +3, Academic Knowledge: Economics +1

Special: Pick three (3) Contacts, each with seven (7) points to spend between Loyalty and Connection

SPY

You're a spy. Not the kind that gets all the glitz and glamour, and not the kind that they make trid movies about. Everyone thinks being a spy is all tuxedos, guns, babes, and cocktails. But you know better: You're a real spy, a working spy. You're embedded where you need to be, undercover. You keep an eye out for documents your handlers want, and you discretely get these and pass them off. Oh, there is risk in that, all right. You get caught and worse things than death await you. But that's why you know how to be cautious, discreet, and misleading.

Attributes: Charisma +1, Willpower +1

Skills: Computer +3, Con +2, Cracking skill group +2, Impersonation +1, Palming +1, Perception +2, Sneaking +2, Unarmed Combat +2, Professional Knowledge: [any] +3

ESCORT

An escort is nothing as vulgar as a prostitute. Prostitutes sell their flesh. You sell an experience. You know how to set the mood over dinner and drinks. You build something up. You are something the rich and powerful seem to not be able to buy—you make them earn it. Make them conquer you. You, your mind, then at last, your body. You are unrivaled in your ability to wrap people around your little finger.

Attributes: Charisma +2

Qualities: Addiction (Moderate) (-9), First Impression (11), Creature of Comfort (-10)

Skills: Blades +1, Con 3 (Seduction +2), Etiquette +3, Perception +1, Performance +2, Interest Knowledge: [Any] +3, Interest Knowledge: [Any] +3, Interest Knowledge: [Any] +3

STREET PREACHER

There's a flood coming—a flood that's going to wash away the filth from the streets. You have a message of salvation to deliver. You will save the sinners. No matter what you need to do, you will save their immortal souls ... even at the cost of their broken bodies. Your mission is paramount, you understand this. You understand salvation comes from odd angles in these godless times, and that you might have to do certain unconventional things for a greater good. Your body is strong, your resolve stronger.

Attributes: Charisma +1, Willpower +2

Qualities: High Pain Tolerance 2 (14), Hobo with a Shotgun (-10)

Skills: Instruction +2, Intimidation +2, Leadership +3, Survival (Urban) +1(+2), Academic Knowledge: Theology +3, Street Knowledge: [City] +3, Street Knowledge: Street Life [+3]

THE ART OF CONFIDENCE

- Well, kids, it's that time again, where we call in a pro to explain how they do that voodoo they do so well—in this case con games. Problem is, we couldn't find one definitive, consummate professional confidence artist. As it turns out, most shadowrunners have some kind of opinion on this particular facet of the job. No runner makes it very far without knowing how to lie, and the techniques we develop tend to take all kinds of forms. We've all got stories and tactics and tricks, and we've all seen these things from different angles.

  Also, I couldn't find one person who knows all the angles.

  Yeah, Haze is great at mind fucks, and Beaker can do chemical forgery, and Elijah can spot fake antiques from a mile off, but none of us has the whole score. So, this one is a group endeavor. Everybody chip in with your favorite con and some useful information about pulling it off.
- Slamm-0!

- This is rather egalitarian.
- Chainmaker

- Shut up.
- Slamm-0!

- So what happened?
- Chainmaker

- We had someone, but they got pinched and locked up.
- Glitch

- To be honest, it's amazing that's never happened before.
- Bull

- So … no one was going to ask me to handle this?
- Haze

- No. A good con means you believe what they are saying. And you are clearly full of shit.
- Pistons

- That being said, no one is going to stop you from contributing like anyone else. And Slamm-0! had something decently nice to say about you up top, which should be enjoyably novel for you.
- Glitch

- Wait, did Glitch just get catty?
- Pistons

THE BASICS

POSTED BY: COPPERFIELD

Before we can really get into the ins and outs of bamboozling, there's a few terms that you should know. This is hardly an exhaustive list, and the terminology keeps changing every few years, which helps sort the insiders from the outsiders. Many of the terms are archaic, and I don't mean stuff from decades ago so much as centuries; cons have existed as long as the language has, and some may be even older than that. It wasn't until the start of the nineteenth century that we had a means, and a motive, to spread our tricks around, selling them to one another, facilitated by travel opportunities, the written word, and a move to a monetary system that meant you could walk away from a job with more than a few eggs.

Let's start with a quick look at what the job does and does not require. Thuggery doesn't require you to be any bigger, stronger, or tougher than your target—just more willing to engage in violence. Con artistry—and, trust me, some of us are *artists*—doesn't require you to be a smooth-talker, dressed to the nines, or blessed with perfect skin; you just have to be willing to use the weaknesses of your fellow man to make your life more comfortable. Check your morals at the door, kids!

- Sounds like Haze.
- Pistons

- That's because I'm good at what I do, and that requires treating marks like obstacles, not people.
- Haze

- You're a monster.
- Pistons

- And you're in denial.
- Haze

- And you're both about to get a time out if this sniping keeps up. Stay on topic.
- Glitch

First up: a rundown of a few basic terms.

- **Con:** Short for "Confidence Man," dating back to Samuel Thompson from 1849, who was terrible at the art. All he really did is ask if he could hold someone's valuables for them, then he'd just ... turn and run. It was pretty pathetic, and it didn't get many people, but even in New York City, there were people who'd show confidence in him and hand them over. Dr. James Houston wrote a scathing report on "the confidence man," but it was a little early for irony and people took his writing as gospel, suddenly thinking of Thompson as some kind of criminal genius. It got picked up by police newsletters, warning of the confidence man, and from there, a legend was born. Before then, we were grifters, swindlers, smooth-talkers, rogues, and a whole host of other colorful terms, but ol' Sammy made us con artists, and we've worn that label ever since.
- **Shill:** This is a co-conspirator who's in on the act. Your shills are best if they're also con artists, letting you each take turns feeding one another, but if your only partners are muscle-bound lunkheads, they still have a use in putting forth an honest face. If you run a three-card monte table, you need at least three people: somebody to play the palooka who wins and shows how easy it is, somebody on lookout, and somebody with a good mouth and better hands running the table itself. If your shills can't con, give 'em another job. If they're pretty, use 'em as bait. If they have a babyface, use 'em as a hook for an honest man. If they're thugs, use 'em when you need to scare money out of somebody. Everybody has a use; find it and exploit them.
- **Marks:** This is everybody else, and sometimes, if you're feeling your oats, even other con artists. Marks are people with something you want. Your job is to get what you want from them, be it money, sex, a hot meal and a roof over your head, or whatever. The only reason a Mark exists is to get taken, and better that you take it from them than the next guy get it.
- **Blow Off :** The last step of a con, getting rid of the mark, leaving you free to take the nuyen and run. This is where you scrap your fake SIN, toss your burner commlink, and move on to find the next mark.
- **Short Con:** Quick and easy, a short con is designed to separate a mark from his wallet. You can go with long preparation and fancy tricks, or you can just get in there and bamboozle 'em, but all you're after is that pocketbook. Shorter work generally means smaller rewards but less risk.
- **Long Con:** You see the trids and the sims, with teams of con artists building elaborate sets, working for weeks if not months at one big hit, but ultimately, a Long Con has one goal: Get the mark to keep feeding you cash, or ideally, turn over their bank account information. It's not about taking their wallet; it's about cleaning them out entirely. Everything else is just a means to that end.

SHORT CONS

PIG IN A POKE

POSTED BY: COPPERFIELD

Or, for the Azzies out there, "El gato por liebre." It's the oldest and, I'll be honest, the worst con there is. You have a bag. You tell the mark that it has a pig in it (or a similar item of value) and set a price. The mark pays you, you give him the bag, then you run away while they look inside and see that, instead of a pig, they just bought a cat. Taa daa! It's just balls-out lying and a pair of fast feet. Sure, if you put a bit more effort into the thing, you

can sleaze it up a bit; flour instead of novacoke, so they can peek inside and think that they're getting something else, but generally speaking, it's the clumsiest of cons.

- Professionals don't do this one except in a pinch or on a dare, but it's the stuff the new kids cut their teeth on.
- Haze

- But does it still work?
- Stone

- As long as you're fast.
- Haze

THE GOLD BRICK

This is the foundation for all true cons that came after the pig. The original form was simple: Get a brick. Paint it gold. Convince people that it really is gold. Sell it to them. Walk away with the cash before they get wise. Walk away and find someone who hasn't been warned about you (or isn't smart enough to listen to the warnings) and do it again. The Gold Brick in this scenario can be anything; today's screamsheet, a hat that blew away from the owner and you snatched up, an old knife, whatever. Your job is to make that plain-old brick into something *amazing* that somebody would give you their credstick for. The screamsheet has news about JetBlack's secret vault—only five nuyen! That hat is the last thing that your dad gave you just before he passed, and it means everything in the world to you, but you haven't eaten in three days, and dad would rather see you sell it off than to have you starve to death. Did you mention the hat was worn by UCAS President Jesse Garrety when he was assassinated? Whatever you think is a fair price, mister. My good man, this "rusty old knife," as you so crudely put it, is a one-of-a-king piece of history! It was taken from the boot of Captain Enrique "Rico" Martinez, the man who shot down Sirrurg down in Aztlan! This is a *dragonslayer's* blade! You can gild it, you can polish it, or you can flat-out lie about it, but whatever you do, you have to *sell* it. Bring in some shills to drive up the offer or to verify your claim, forge some papers as evidence, let them know that it's gotta go *now* and will never be available again—whatever it takes to imbue it with value.

And if you can sell it, then get it back, you can sell it again. Or just sell it, take the money, then neglect to ever turn the item over to the buyer. Pure profit.

- You make a deal, you keep a deal. With no honor, you're lower than scum.
- Riot

- Yeah, but you're scum with a full belly. How's honor taste at 2 a.m.?
- Clockwork

THE BOLIVIAN FIRE DRILL

POSTED BY: RED

This is the single most useful con in the world, as far as I can tell, because it's something you need to get into places all over. It's good anywhere, but it works best in areas with a dense, threatening hierarchy, like a corporate office.

It's simple: Anyone who walks somewhere looking like they belong there must actually belong there. "Sure," I hear you saying, "but that's just being confident and blending in." Of course you know how to do that. Except this is specific. In *this* case, the three basic components are haste, stress, and a prop.

First comes the haste. You need to be walking wherever you are walking briskly. Not running, which suggests danger or pursuit, but not strolling. You need to get where you are going, you know where that is, and you are making all due haste while trying to maintain decorum. Why? Because you are under pressure. You know this is important, and you don't want to screw it up, because whatever you are holding is important and dangerous. And that is causing ...

Stress. You need to ooze stress. Not like a bomb is strapped to your chest, but like you have a lot on your mind. Your speed is informed by your stress. The stress implies that there is professional weight on your shoulders. You are a hazardous quantity, and in the ecosystem of any byzantine social structure, hazard is infectious. No one wants that. So they stay out of your way. But let's say someone's job is to get in your way and vet your credentials.

That's why you have a prop. The traditional go-to is a folder full of documents. You clutch it, and you snatch it away if they try to take a look. "Ma'am, I am not authorized to show you that. I can't even look. I have orders to get it on Mr. Gaines' desk within the next three minutes." They stay in your way, and you have your response ready. Let that stress leak out. Let implied consequences infect. "If it's not there in the next two and a half minutes, I have to tell him why. I have to tell him *who*."

- Wait, what? Hardcopy? Why?
- /dev/grrl

- Because hardcopy isn't connected to the Matrix. It's not hackable. The only time things make it to print anymore is when they are important enough to be eyes-only and off-line. Plus, it's visible to passersby, and that makes an impact
- Copperfield

Now, this whole thing can fall apart under scrutiny, depending on your ability to improvise and how much preparation you put into your props, lies, and research.

If you're using the fire drill, odds are you're flying by the seat of your pants, but you can pick up all kinds of quick supporting clues to buttress your lies in a quick news scan or just listening in to conversations while you can. Every crumb of information supports deception, especially if it's just one little jot they can relate to in a sea of rapid-fire pressure.

- Fast-Talk 101. This is bread and butter to any runner worth their cyber.
- Haze

- Good to know we don't need you.
- Pistons

- Don't push me, kids.
- Bull

THE DANCING PIG

POSTED BY: CARBON SCORE

While it all started with a dancing pig, the pig is really just a prop for something that keeps people enthralled. You can replace them with a street busker, a juggler, some kids breakdancing, or a gal doing a one-troll production of Shakespeare, it really doesn't matter. The key element is that you have someone or something keeping everyone watching in one direction, while a shill moves through the crowd, picking pockets. It's nearly a lost art these days as nobody carries enough cash to bother with, but you never know when you need to distract a guard long enough to pull his keycard off a wall or slip something incriminating into a suit's pocket while at a party. What, you never plant evidence on people? You guys really need to think outside the box more.

- The classic plant is to distract someone with high heels and a low-cut dress, laughing at their bad jokes and playing with your hair while your partner plants a bug on them. You excuse yourself to the ladies' room, or get pulled away to another conversation, while the mark is none the wiser. From there, you can track them when they leave, or have them be an unwitting pair of eyes and ears for a meeting that they're attending later.
- Hard Exit

- A ton of kids start off as pickpockets this way. Getting caught sucks, but the reward's worth the risk when you don't have more than a shirt on your back.
- Slamm-0!

- Unless you're in a country that cuts the hands off thieves.
- Goat Foot

CLIP JOINT

POSTED BY: KAT O' NINE TALES

The strip club has a VIP section. Who knows what goes on back there? You soon will, you lucky so-and-so! It's a modest fee to rent the room, of course, but it comes with drinks and your very own private dancer. Did I say private? I suppose I should have said "intimate." It's a special treatment, just for you! The drinks keep flowing and the dancer's just for you ... until the money runs out. When you can't pay, they won't play, and if you stir up a fuss because you didn't get what you wanted, then you get to meet Tiny. He's the two-and-a-half-meter troll who'll be introducing you to the door. If he likes you, he might even open it first.

Now, how is that a con, you might ask. Aren't you just exchanging money for goods and services, like you do at any other establishment? It may seem that way until you see the bill (assuming they deign to show you one). One hundred nuyen for snacks you don't remember eating (though you think you saw the dancer having something to eat and passing a plate to her friends). Forty nuyen for the lap dance you got before you went into the private room, one hundred for each lap dance in the private room, two hundred for each "champagne lap dance." The cost of the champagne is separate, at a smooth fifty nuyen per bottle. It goes on like that, long enough to make you wonder what you were thinking opening a tab with your bank account number. Time to open a new bank account and attempt to display more wisdom in the future.

- No matter what the stripper says, there ain't no sex in the Champagne Room.
- Bull

- Clearly, you don't visit the right place of business.
- SeaTAC Sweetie

- Hey Sweetie, I've been meaning to ask ... you have an LTG?
- Clockwork

- PM sent.
- SeaTAC Sweetie

- The important thing to remember here is that you (the club worker) have to draw out the temptation. You can't just deliver the big payoff while there's still cash. The whole con depends on stringing the mark tighter and tighter, so when the money runs out, they *feel* ripped off, but they have no logical way to justify it. Your heavy could rightfully say, "Hey, chummer, if you had more scratch, you wouldn't still have the itch." And what could they do but agree?

  The truly wealthy rarely get clipped. They can afford the best, and they get bored when they get teased for too

long. And odds are, they have heavies of their own who will break you in half if their client feels cheated. If you're going to try this, you have to find the right niche of marks.
- Red

- Who, specifically?
- Borderline

- You want the ones who hit the sweet spot, where they've got enough money to be worth it, but not so much that someone aside from them is protecting it, and where they have a psychological lust that can't be denied, along with a pathological need to protect their wealth.
- Haze

- You're describing a sarariman. Almost verbatim.
- Baka Dabora

- Precisely. They work eighty-hour weeks and save their money for the weekend or a big bash at the end of the month. They want to live large, they are wound tight, feeling extravagant, but want to get their money's worth. And they don't know how to spot a scam. It's the perfect balance.
- Haze

MELON DROP

POSTED BY: COPPERFIELD

These days, this job is most often done with a commlink, but anything fragile will do. The rule is simple: you have a Thing, often in a box, covered by a cloth, or held where the mark can't get a good look at it. You bump into them, the Thing falls to the ground, and shatters. Oh no! Depending on your read, you can be angry and try to cow the mark into submission, or if they read honest, you can cry and lament the loss of something precious. If they don't seem to budge about paying to replace it, your shill steps in to berate them, threaten to call the cops, or otherwise cause a scene. Soon, you have a small mob upset at the "terrible person" who broke the Thing, until they relent and throw money to make the problem go away.

- What if the money doesn't equal what you broke?
- Sticks

- New to this? You use a commlink that's already broken, or a broken vase that you pulled out of a dumpster, or something made out of cheap glass that looks like it used to be more expensive than it really was (That's the last thing my grandmother gave me before she died! You monster!) Your investment's not worth drek, but they don't know that.
- Haze

- If sugar doesn't work, try salt. Have a couple of heavies rolling along and claim you're small-time Mafia, Yakuza, Richard Villiers' black sheep bastard son, whatever, and they'll pay up just to avoid the sudden physical or legal perils of having crossed you.
- Red Anya

FUCHI TWO-FOR-ONE

Every player loves a mark, but sometimes you almost feel bad for the corporate ones. This is an oldie but a goodie; spying a vacationing corporate drone out from the safety of their controlled world, you swoop in and offer to trade them some nuyen for their "useless" corp scrip, letting them know that "the suits" have lied to them about how much their money's really worth. You offer them two nuyen per scrip unit, and you pass over a certified credstick that shows a fancy number. Let them run it themselves to see how much is on there, telling them that they'd be doing you a favor by letting them buy their scrip, while giving them money that'd let them buy all kinds of goodies on the outside world. Being such smart marks, one step ahead of us filthy street scum, they agree, pass the cash, get the credstick, and jander off while you pocket the cash ... and the credstick that actually had nuyen on it, having palmed it and swapped it for an empty.

- Letting the mark see the credstick's value builds trust, the key element of a con.
- Haze

- Yeah? What happens if they take the stick and run?
- Stone

- You beat the drek out of 'em.
- /dev/grrl

- *sniffle* They grow up so fast.
- Kane

RING REWARD

Another old one that preys on honest people rather than crooked ones. What, you thought you couldn't con an honest man? Boy, you chummers are gonna get fleeced. The premise is simple; you meet a girl who's sitting down and crying or who's wandering around, clearly desperately searching for something. If you offer to help, she tells you that she lost her engagement ring and she only just got it and she's just mortified and begs you to help. You pitch in, but she's not doing well at all and, finally, she just breaks down sobbing. You offer to take over and suggest that she goes and gets some rest, and she insists on giving you her contact info and promises a good reward if you can manage it. She gives you a kiss on the cheek, blesses you for all your help, and steps off into a cab.

A few minutes later, a guy comes sliming along and you hear him offer to sell a ring to some passerby. They shrug it off and keep going, but you get closer. He's clearly holding a ring like the girl described. If you approach him, he'll say that he "Found it" or that it was his "Dear sweet mommy's" in a way that shows that he's just a terrible liar. He's asking for half of what she offered as a reward and, since you can't talk him out of it, you agree to buy it from him. He gives you the ring, then slips off. You call up the gal ... and you get no answer. Later, she and the fellow meet up and split the money you coughed up, at which time they set up a new ring and start over with a new mark.

- You can use about anything for this prop; commlink, cufflinks, whatever, as long as it's easy to misplace and 'valuable'.
- Haze

- So *that's* why she didn't answer?! Son of a ...
- Sounder

THE DWARVEN SPEEDBUMP

This one's on the way down as GridGuide takes a stronger hold on the streets of the sprawl, but away from the wealthy sections, or anywhere a few years ago, it was simple; you wait on a corner for a car to make a turn, then fall onto the hood or bounce off of a fender. The driver stops, worried that you're hurt, and a crowd draws in. You might threaten to sue, or try to wave it off with an "I'm fine" then stagger or fall to one knee, eliciting sympathy from the crowd. There's no way that they'll let a monster just drive away from this, and eventually they'll throw money until the problem goes away. A second version of this is to actually sue (good luck!), but the third draws from the Melon Drop, where you're fine, but their car smashed your commlink/grandma's vase/etc. From there, you follow that script.

- Modern cars have good sensors that record images from sides, making this nearly impossible. Older cars, however ...
- Turbo Bunny

- Yeah, I get that, but ... why "Dwarven" Speedbump?
- Sounder

- Simple; an ork or troll's too easy to see and couldn't pull it off, but a dwarf? You never see 'em.
- 2XL

- You don't find that a little insensitive?
- Lyran

- This con works a lot better if you have some quick healing nearby, like if you're a mage or a money-hungry regenerator. You can afford to take some real damage and let the blood speak for itself.
- Red

- If you haven't got that, a little ketchup or stage blood goes a long way. Squibs have never been so profitable outside Hollywood!
- Copperfield

THE MURPHY GAME

Sometimes known as the White Van Scam, it's a simple one. A couple of guys pull up in a vehicle (the classic plain white van) and offer to sell some great things at a low, low price. Sometimes they'll spin a story about how their cousin ordered a bunch of things, but the company sent him too many so they're selling them at a discount, sometimes it "fell off a truck," and now and then, they'll flat-out tell you that the stuff is hot and that it's priced to move. Whatever lie gets your money to them, really. The items that they're selling are cheap knock-offs, broken, or fake (bricks stuck in commlink boxes are always popular) but they rely on three things; one, that they'll be gone before you figure that out; two, that you'll be too embarrassed at being fleeced to go after them; and three, that the entire thing was illegal and that you can't really call the cops on them without admitting that you were looking to buy stolen goods in the first place. No matter the jewelry, clothes, or electronics, the angle's always the same: get the cash and give no refunds.

- Of course, sometimes they really are selling stolen goods, at which point you can get a great price.
- Kane

- Or they wind up being cops in an undercover sting and arrest you.
- Bull

- Or they wind up pretending to be cops, in order to shake you down for all your cash, at which point they take your stuff and keep what they already had.
- Hard Exit

- Sometimes, real cops do that too.
- Netcat

- Oh, like there are any *real* cops left.
- Slamm-0!

LONG CONS

THE MONEY MACHINE

POSTED BY: COSMO

You let a mark overhear a conversation you're having with a shill where you let slip that you've got a guy who's the best forger in the world. He's invented a machine that literally prints money. You wave around a few bills, just casually enough for your mark to bite, then act shocked—shocked!—when he butts in. It's against your better judgement, but you'll take them both to see the guy, but you hope you don't get in trouble. The three of you ride over to the guy's lair, which is a run-down warehouse, a seedy hotel, whatever place you were able to get prepped, and you introduce him to the gang. There's a lot of grumbles since you brought too many people—one more than they'd all agreed on—but you're able to calm them down. The room is half guys who got in early and half new guys, and they all want to see the Money Machine in action. Your inventor brings it out and shows it off. He takes requests from the room ... need a twenty? Bam. Twenty. How about a fifty? Bam! Fifty. A hundred? Child's play. Whatever they ask for, he just hits a few buttons, twists some dials, and off it goes. You guys are gonna make a killing with this thing, but it needs some rare stuff to power it up. Everybody has to pony up a grand but, if they do, they'll be able to generate hundred grand each. It's brilliant!

The inventor, though, seems nervous. A couple of the other guys have been giving him the stinkeye, and he's worried that they're going to doublecross him. He wants to sell the machine off to just one person so he can skip town and vanish. Your mark is the lucky guy who gets this offer, since if you trusted him, he's got to be good people. Those guys all know the inventor's face, and yours, but this new guy? He can buy the machine and get away with no one the wiser. They'll come looking for him and his cousin, right? It's the perfect crime! All they need is twenty grand ... ten to get supplies so that the machine will run, then ten more to get you and your cousin out of there. If he can scrounge it up in the next twenty-four hours, you'll sell him the machine and instead of a lousy hundred grand, he'll have a million. It's too good to pass up! You can even run him to the bank to pull the cash out with nobody the wiser. He waffles but eventually gives in. You go fetch the cash, or give him until morning to make some calls and sell some stuff off, then bring him back to buy the machine. Your cousin even shows him how it works, then waits around to make sure he can do it proper; there's no point in making anything but hundreds at this point, so you churn out a few, then take your leave.

The whole thing's a scam of course. The bills that you used were real, so that they looked like "perfect forgeries" that no one could detect. It's a small investment

in the grand scheme of things. The other people in the room were shills and were reading off a script to feed the right bills in the right order (twenty, fifty, etc.) The machine is just a prop that pulls money out of a small storage compartment, which hold ten bills at a time. It won't run out until a few minutes after you and your "cousin" are gone, having proved that the machine works and stuck around long enough to print off a few to show your trust in the process. You'll have to split it with the other guys later, but you made twenty grand for a couple days of work. Not bad.

This scam got easier thanks to nanoforges, which can help you convince marks that your machine could print gold, silver, whatever, with only a few adjustments in the overall story. All the average joker knew is that they were miracle machines, right? Easy as can be. The Nanopocalypse has soured people on the whole concept for now, but the classics always make a comeback. Get started, now and you can beat them to the punch the next go 'round.

- This kind of scam is fairly obsolete in the age of digital credit. Next to no one uses actual currency anymore, and even credsticks are suspect. Only criminals ever ask for them.
- Mr Bonds

- The new spin is called The Philosopher's Stone. Same basic idea, except it exploits the newness of alchemy to bilk mundanes into thinking they're being sold a way to make gold. Or orichalcum, if they really want to push the boundaries of believability.
- Lyran

- Sometimes you can use the isolation of corp culture to your advantage. An arcology kid from a zaibatsu like Yamatetsu may think Ares corpscrip is printed cash like in the movies (a briefcase full of bills still looks cooler than an escrow number to Hollywood), so you can probably still take them for a ride the old-fashioned way, but it's still pretty hard to find someone who buys into hard currency.
- Dr. Spin

THE SALTED MINE

This one was big during the Orichalcum Rush about two decades back, but you can still find a few suckers today. The premise is simple; you find a hole, then prep it with something precious, like gold, silver, or gems, then you rope a mark into checking it out. You found it and show your claim, show them how rich the place is going to be, drop your story (I have to leave to take care of my sick mom, I slept with the mayor's husband and I'm going to get run out of town, whatever) that explains why you have to unload this money factory, collect a healthy payout, then skip town before the planted pieces run out. Back in the day, you could load an actual shotgun with gold dust and spend an afternoon shooting it into the walls, thus "salting" the mine, but these days you have to be a bit more fancy. If you have a shill with some Talent, a few Earth spirits make this one a breeze. Without that, you have to get inventive. Finding oil on property worked up until the oil crash, so it doesn't come up very often. Then again, as long as you can manufacture deeds, you can turn anywhere into a family estate, an old hotel, or an empty field that would make a great resort some day. If they buy *that*, then you can always sell 'em a bridge.

- Any time there's a corp shuffle, territory, stock, material, and facilities become big targets for cons. Everything is cheap when the bullets and subpoenas are flying ("Mitsuhama hit squads are out to get me! I gotta get some cash fast to escape!"), but when the dust settles, the corps will buy the pieces they need rather than killing for them, and they'll be worth a mint. Of course, a lot more "stock" is traded than actually exists. And who is the exchange commission going to try to prosecute for these fake shares?The supposed con artist? Or the person who just tried to unload fake stock on an "innocent" megacorp? Be careful out there.
- Mr. Bonds

- Any time the sprawl government claims they will gentrify a neighborhood or reclaim a barrens, you get a bunch of wannabe development barons who end up paying through the nose for phony deeds, cheap decrepit buildings they think a corp will need for building rights. Chicago's CZ is seeing plenty of that right now. Screamsheets might as well be stock reports for those cons.
- Kay St. Irregular

- More like weather reports. It's gonna rain ... money.
- Copperfield

- The important thing to realize is that this con is about a place, or material so heavy it constitutes a place, rather than an item that can be transported and sold.
- Haze

CHAIN LETTERS

They still work. The idea is simple: get a scam letter, send it to a million marks for an investment of ten nuyen or so. All you need is one person to bite to break even, and everything after that's a bonus. The marks help by forwarding it on to their own circle of friends, creating a self-perpetuating circle of con. Get a drop box for the mail to be dropped off (digitally, of course) and take a look at it once every few months to see what's dribbled in. It's the laziest of scams, but it gradually works by slowly trolling through a large percentage of the entire world for a nice number of suckers.

- All you have to do is send ten nuyen to the first name below! After you do, their name will be crossed off, your name added to the end of the list, and you pass it to ten of your friends! In only five more mailings, you'll make a *million* nuyen! WOW!!!
- Slamm-0!

- I swear to God, Fred, if that shows up in my inbox ...
- Glitch

<<<System Message: PING! You've got mail!>>>

- You. Are. A dead man.
- Glitch

- For everyone else, there's SpamBlockers.
- Bull

- Yeah, only poor people with shitty firewalls ever get roped into this stuff.
- /dev/grrl

CARIBBEAN BRIDE

POSTED BY: KAT O' NINE TALES

You're a lonely guy, searching through Matrix dating sites, when you spy a cute gal from the Caribbean League. You send her a message, she sends one back, and the next thing you know you're in a whirlwind romance. Unfortunately, she can't see you in person since she's living on a poor island. You start helping her out with a few small bills—a gift for her mom this month, some groceries the next, enough for a new security system after her front door nearly gets kicked in, and so on. She's ever so thankful and gives you rewards in return, until, eventually, she wants to meet you in person. All she needs is airfare. The first time it doesn't go through, since there was a sudden health emergency with her mom, her motorcycle got stolen and she needed to buy a replacement, whatever, but maybe in a few more months, she can try again. Eventually, it all falls apart and she dumps you, having gradually pumped your account dry over time. Then again, you also know a guy who met a girl just like her, who he eventually married, and now they live happily here in the UCAS. You just had bad luck this time, right? The next one'll be real for sure! Oh hey look, you just got a message from a gal in China ...

The trick here is to milk the mark gradually and keep them interested. Some people try to do that with dating bots, but those are pretty easy to spot for the poor lonely saps who fall for this scam. Cheesecake photos, Matrix sex, and heartfelt letters can go a long way to keeping them in your pocket. Then again, you've got to worry that you've netted someone who is content with digital nookie. Much like the Clip Joint con, you've got to keep the mark wanting. The hungrier they get, the more desperately they'll spend their money to find relief. Reason takes a back seat to desire. You want them blinded by want.

- You also need to make sure to never give them any means of tracking you down. It wouldn't be the first time the mark got a sudden case of courage and decided to find their imperiled love to rescue them from their woes, or even just surprise them with all the romance you've been building up in them.
- Red

- So, hey, TB? About that digital fellow of yours ...
- /dev/grrl

- Gateskeeper's real! He just ... doesn't have a body, you know?
- Turbo Bunny

- You should see if he wants to move in. Two birds, one stone.
- Plan 9

BLUE BOOK

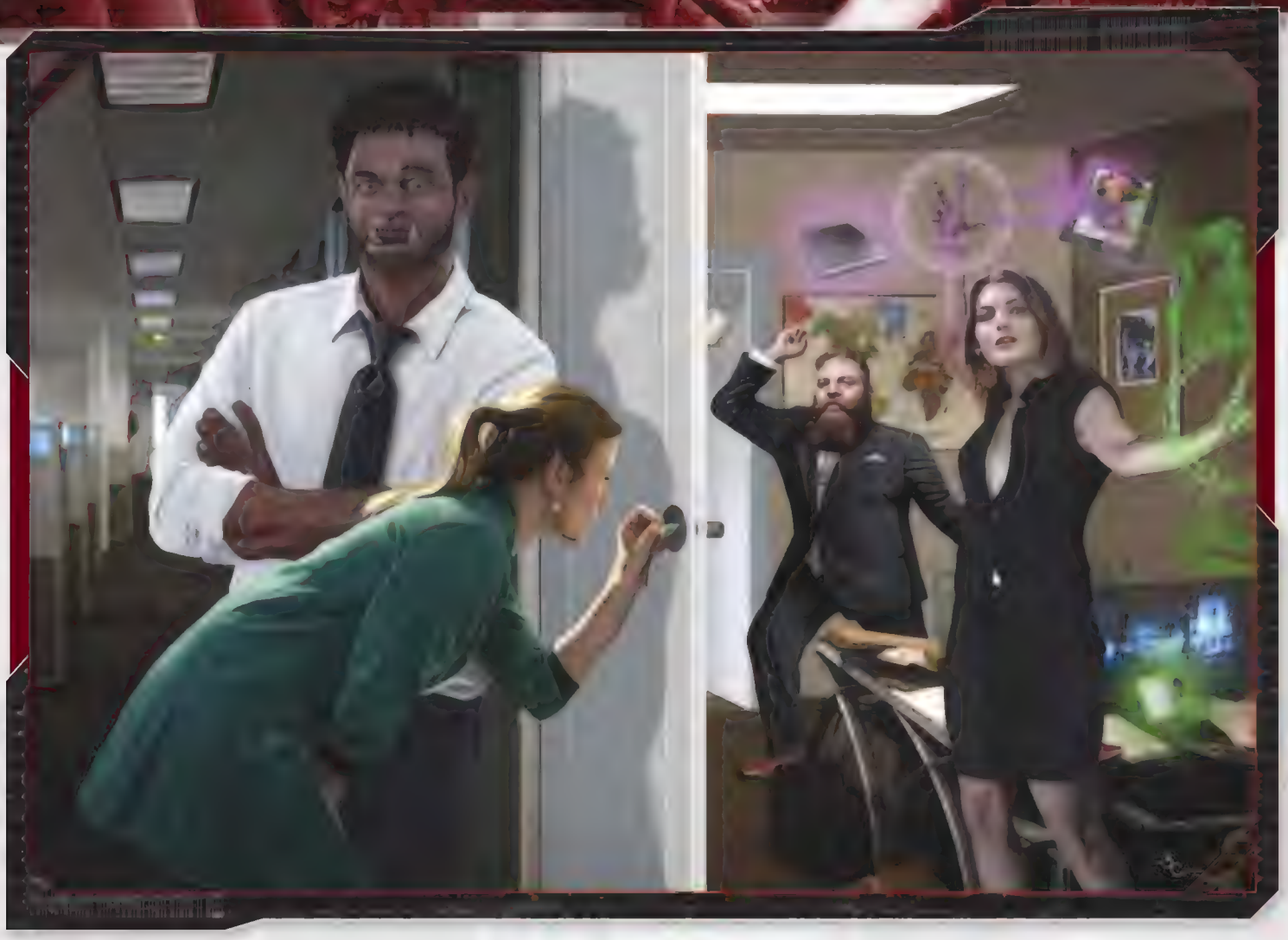
You've put out some feelers, hoping to get a foot in the door of your business of choice, but, so far, no bites. Just when you've about given up hope, you get a call. There's this prestigious organization that helps out people just like you and, for a nominal fee, that can get your great new novel/headshot/demo tape to the right people. This is your big break, kid! All you have to do is sign over a little cash and we can make you a *star*!

- I turned off the flashing glitter and rainbow effects. You're welcome.
- Glitch

- That's why you're the man, Glitch. Oh hey, I'm reminded! We're looking to start a Wall of Hackers in here, with a 360 still of your avatar, a list of your greatest hits, and a contact point so that you can get jobs. It'll take a bit of money for the hardware upgrade, but if we get about ten of you guys, it should be enough. Five hundred nuyen will net you a spot, or for two thousand nuyen, I can get it animated, maybe slip in some flash and sparkle.
- Slamm-0!

- Huh. Not a bad idea, but will it be open to non-hackers too?
- Sticks

- I don't see why not.
- Slamm-0!



- Fred.
- Bull

- Awww, I wouldn't have *really* taken his money...
- Slamm-0!

- You're no damn fun anymore, Bull.
- Red

- You know what sucks about this scam? You actually *do* need these people to make it, sometimes. The market is so saturated with middlemen and bullshit that a lot of talented kids wash up before they ever get their shot, and this kind of scam is *really* easy to mistake for the real thing.
- Kat o' NineTales

- Awww, Daddy's special girl doesn't get to be a rockstar? Cry me a river. Too stupid to make it in the biz.
- Clockwork

- I don't tell you how your drones work. Or how to be an asshole. Why don't you stick to what you're good at and leave the rest to the professionals?
- Kat o' NineTales

PHONY CURES

POSTED BY: BUTCH

Snake oil is as old as medicine itself. Maybe older. The mark has ills, and you've got the cures. Time was, you could chalk this up to traveling shows or Internet scams, but the world is a lot more complicated, and there's a whole lot more ways to separate suckers from their nuyen.

First, the most common: Matrix.

You start up a little disposable site, offering some brand-new miracle cure or nutritional supplement that supposedly is brand new and works miracles. Fake testimonials, supposed quotes and studies from celebrities, doctors, and medical foundations that don't really exist. Promise anything you want, and some sucker will lay out credit on hope alone.

- Just be sure you've got a site you can burn quick if someone reports you. GOD can come down hard when the slog of bureaucracy isn't in your favor.
- Slamm-0!

- If the setup is quick enough, you don't even have to ship out product. Make a bunch of sales and then close out when the transfer clears. Not a lot of volume, but not bad for quick cash.
- /dev/grrl

- That's really smart ... except sending nothing at all puts you in much riskier territory. If you deliver some kind of product, you can throw in a big cut-and-paste fine print that you take no risk on the delivered product's end results. If it's something harmless, the law will just laugh at the mark for being a sucker. If you didn't deliver anything at all, you might draw investigation, even a task force if you ripped off a large enough sum, or hit the wrong client. Better to sell swamp water than nothing at all.
- Mr. Bonds

Second: Live demonstration. Nothing sells people like seeing results in the flesh. You don't hit as broad a potential audience as you would using the Matrix, but you can pack it up and move along, plant shills in the audience, etc. This tends to take longer since you work with smaller crowds, and a passing cruiser or gang can turn your product upside down. This takes less setup and is almost always small-time. You've seen this kind of thing, I guarantee it.

- During any mob shakeup, you see these outfits pop up in the Crime Mall. Without a larger organization to work to protect the integrity of the goods, it's a lot easier to sweep in and start selling counterfeit Fairlight Calibans.
- Red Anya

- Well, I mean, *more* counterfeit Calibans.
- Bull

- I saw a pretty twisted setup of this in Portland once. Street-level wiz-gangers posing as miracle healers. Mostly they just used weak alchemy mixes, passed them off as all kinds of cures.
- Frosty

Third: Playing the middleman. You'd be shocked how many pharma reps from the corps come knocking on doors to drop off free samples or sell their latest product to licensed doctors, or even street docs. If the physician in question is dumb enough to take the line without doing their homework, you can offload bulk placebos on them and walk away, job done. Just never, ever get into a situation where you need them to stitch you up. They might recoup their losses in your organs.

- Speaking from experience?
- Hannibelle

- I wouldn't be here if I was that stupid.
- Butch

There are three things to keep in mind when pulling this scam.

- **Price.** You've got to walk a fine line here. Too cheap, and they suspect something is up. Too expensive and they'll never take the gamble unless they are really, really desperate. Walk that fine line where the cost is low enough to be worth a gamble. Depending on the promised results, you can gauge what people are willing to pay. An Awakening catalyst, for example, can draw some decent prices from bilking an idiot of his excess money. A cure for CFD, on the other hand, is worth a fortune, as long as you don't mind preying on people who genuinely need help.

- One of the reasons psychologists charge as much as they do is because of this principle. If someone gets sound advice from a friend for free, more often than not they take it at that value. If you are paying someone for it, you want to get your money's worth, and you put more effort into it. The right price makes it feel like it's worth more, and reinforces the con.
- Dr. Spin

- **Plausibility.** You can promise the moon, but most folks won't buy it, literally or figuratively. There is a balance between desperation and doubt. Find it. No one is going to buy a lotion that turns you into a troll, and I doubt anyone is stupid or crazy enough to buy an "infected" plasma pack to try to become a vampire. But supplements that supposedly boost mental acuity and memory, build muscle mass, or produce appealing pheromones in the user are old, old cons that have somehow never stopped working.

- I think you're underestimating the capacity for stupidity in metahumanity.
- Bull

- Actually, it's an old con because of the placebo effect. You get someone taking pills they believe in, and their body does the rest. It's been known to work in psych wards, overcrowded ERs, and grumpy children. Headaches go away, minor pains alleviated, people sleep easier or feel happier because they give themselves permission. Their body makes it real. Hell, in isolated cases even cancer has gone into remission.
- Red

- Not often enough to warrant putting lives in danger.
- Butch

- There's debate in Awakened academia over the possibility that the placebo effect might just be a minor manifestation of latent adept abilities.
- Lyran

- See, that's why the con works.
- Haze

  - **Product.** Figure out exactly what you are selling. Not the supposed goods, but what actual material you are passing off. The simplest thing is placebos. You might get a pill mold or a big roll of slap patches and fill them with sugar. Or you can cut legitimate product and sell it for more, just like the dealers do, though in this case, it's more a grey-market scam.

- No one said this has to be just medicines, either. It's pretty easy to pass off junk code or one-shots to would-be deckers looking for a killer app to start their careers as the next hottest thing on the Matrix. Most are too stupid to consider why they're getting such a good deal.
- Slamm-0

- In other words, corp kids.
- /dev/grrl

- Exactly.
- Slamm-0!

- This method isn't just for selling bullshit, you know. You can sell hot product, narcotics, BTLs, all kinds of stuff by claiming it's something more legitimate. Narcotics can pass as herbal remedies. One of the best scams I ever saw was this guy selling a liquid speedball of deepweed and Tempo as a new miracle drug that could induce Awakening. I was amazed how fast he sold out. Sure, they were selling fake results, but the product, itself, was real.
- Beaker

- I heard the same for some Cal-hots a Tong was selling online. Rebranded them as all kinds of stuff. My favorite was the "skillwire trainers." Made people think they were downloading skills right into their brains for good. One born every minute, I swear.
- Sounder

A plastic water bottle with a cheap label won't get you far claiming it's mystical water from Chichen Itza, and a prescription bottle full of breath mints aren't much better. But if you're trying for a short-term scam, it might just be enough. The real profit is in repeat business. Repackaged vitamins can pass muster as some kind of super-supplement, nootropic, or gentle leónization drug to most chumps, especially if you use a different brand from the ones they are familiar with. The balkanization of the old FDA and similar organizations by megacorps and new countries means that every concern has to make its own version of the same stuff, so identifying pills by sight requires far more research than ever before. If you get your hands on a pill maker or a 3D printer, you can design your own.

The other thing to keep in mind is how long you want this scam to last, as you can do both short and long varieties of this job. A fly-by-night is probably good for a few thousand nuyen, in and out quick. A more long-term setup is a lot like starting a company. You can make regular income selling placebos over a long period of time, especially if you're careful about the product itself. It's a con that happens so often and so successfully it's debatably legal.

THE SHORT CON

The quick version of the snake oil con is all about moving product fast for as little effort as possible. Odds are the product is crap, the marketing is direct and local, either direct to the mark or through a quickly assembled Matrix site. That means it's usually small potatoes, street-corner scams and door-to-door operations. When it's a big one, it's a blitz. With the right kind of salesmanship, a lot of snake oil goes out the door in a hurry.

- Could you elaborate on "the right kind"?
- Chainmaker

- There's an old French saying, "Trouve un trou et remplis le"—that is, "Find a hole and fill it." It's all about supply and demand. If you know people are going to feel a need, you can be there, ready with the goods to sate it. The early bird gets the worm, though. You might get your hands on some market projections or consumer data, or just keep your ear to the grindstone to see what the next big thing is.
- Mr. Bonds

- Holy crap, could you fit more proverbs in there?
- /dev/grrl

- Hey, a proverb in the hand is worth two in the 'trix.
- Slamm-0!

- Easy, now. You can't get blood from a stone.
- Red

- Guys, guys! A house divided cannot stand!
- Chainmaker

- First, that was terrible. Second, most of those were idioms.
- Mr. Bonds

- You're the idiom!
- 2XL

THE LONG CON

Odds are you're not going to run this, but you're going to run into it. In fact, statistically, you already have. Triple-As even do this, and they do it most often with hokey nutritional supplements. In the age of cheap augmentation, people still go in for "all-natural" health solutions, which are mostly just kelp and watered-down vitamins and minerals. Others sell water that is supposedly from some special mystic source, but just went through a fifty-nuyen purifier. Or the shockingly popular "Magic for Mundanes," utter bullshit guides that supposedly teach anyone how to use magic.

- Most lorestores actually stock those guides, which every mega has a piece of. Ninety-nine percent of all Pentacle Publishing books are total crap, metaphysical mumbo-jumbo that is mostly equal parts self-empowerment philosophy and delusional bullshit. But they have to stock the stuff to make the rent, just because there aren't enough mages with enough nuyen to keep them in business. Tchotchkes and self-help books masquerading as legitimate sorcery keep those stores open. Any mage can tell it's not real, so the shopkeep can easily sort the real buyers from the wannabes.
- Lyran

- It's crazy, but the occasional budding mage looking for answers sometimes teaches themselves how to use magic with those crap volumes. They end up following what is effectively one of the Chaos traditions, and that stirs up no end of controversy, since total nonsense becomes actual sorcery, casting more legitimate traditions into doubt.
- Ethernaut

- So that means Universal Magical Theory is right?
- Red

- Let's continue that years-long debate in another thread?
- Frosty

- Deal.
- Red

- The lesson to take away here is the same for magic and antiques: The good stuff is in the back.
- Elijah

The long con takes time to set up. You need large amounts of product with a reasonable ability to bring in repeat customers, and the means to put it together for a while. Effectively, you've got to do your best impression of setting up a legitimate enterprise. You may even end up paying taxes and tariffs, buying permits, and more. At that point, you're entering grey markets. You might, for example, sell a vitamin drink. It's mostly sugar with some soy and vitamin A, but you have it made in a country where that's considered enough, then you sell it somewhere else. Distance and bureaucracy are your shields, and you can see investigators and pursuers coming a mile away.

- How is this, in any way, different from any corporation?
- /dev/grrl

- I already said they do it. Most people just don't take the time to realize. They want to drink something sweet and lie to themselves that it's somehow healthy. That's how MacroCherry+ keeps selling at the Stuffer Shack.
- Butch

- What?! MC+ isn't good for me? Damnit, what the hell, man?!
- 2XL

- I told you you weren't losing weight.
- Hard Exit

- I figured the protein was converting it to muscle!
- 2XL

- That's not how protein works.
- Beaker

- I have seen this kind of setup before. I was doing a recon run in Singapore for what I think was Aztechnology to figure out what this supplement was and where they were getting their ingredients. I'm figuring it's another "steal the secret recipe" caper, which I've never understood because anyone with the money to hire runners could just as well get a chemical breakdown of the stuff and figure it out with a bit of trial and error. I'm on my way, and I ask a friend to start crunching the chemicals to see if that can give me some kind of heads up. She tells me it's some kind of Awakened honey. Of course, by the time she'd sent that, I was already dealing with some Asiatic variant of honey bee insect spirits and their shaman.
- Red

- Could have been worse. Imagine bullet wasp flesh forms!
- Lyran

- Shhhhhhhhhhhhhut up.
- Slamm-0!

- Remind me to stay away from Singapore. And what was the drink?
- Sounder

- I think it was called BuzzGulp. Had this awful jungle, "Start your day with a buzz!" Real earworm. Anyway, this was back in '61. Once I knew what I needed to know, I called local authorities. I think Renraku went in with flamethrowers and extreme prejudice, but I only read about it, and like I said, this was a while back.
- Red

- Do I even want to know why insects were trying to put their honey in us?
- /dev/grrl

- Ugh. Someone pass the brain bleach.
- Slamm-0!

- On a lighter note, I knew a guy who set up an operation like this. Had a bit of a happier ending: A corp decided to just buy him out. He left crime to do the same with more legitimate stuff, farming up small businesses to sell them later. Sometimes criminal enterprise is a gateway drug to being an honest corporate scumbag.
- Mr. Bonds

THE SINLESS WINNER

POSTED BY: COPPERFIELD

You get approached by a guy with a problem. He won an official contest, such as a lottery, a prize drawing, what-have-you, but he's SINless and, as such, he can't claim the prize. He can show you the ticket and gives you a Matrix link that shows the unclaimed reward and the indication that the ticket you see is the real deal. Since he can't go get it and time's running out, he's desperate and makes you a deal: for a low price, he'll sell you the ticket and let you go get the reward. He figures that half, a quarter, ten percent of the prize is still better

than none of it, and he can't touch it without your help. He'll haggle a bit, trying to get a bit more, but in the end, he'll admit that he's got no strength of position and relents for less than he wanted. You pass the cash, then dash off for your prize ... only to find out that it was a scam the entire time. The Matrix site you looked at is phony, set up solely to give weight to his claim, but there's no prize or, alternatively, the prize is real, but the ticket's a forgery. Either way, by the time you find out, he's long gone with whatever you paid out.

- Desperation is key in many a con. The con artist knows they are making a bad deal (on the surface, at least), but they only have so much time, so they agree to it, giving the mark the illusion of power. Some cons flip it, making the mark act fast or miss an opportunity, but the illusion of power makes them more willing to invest than if they feel the pressure themselves.
- Haze

- The best part is that the speed of the con means you don't have to invest too much time in the site or the ticket. Just enough to pass muster until they make the buy. Everyone dreams of finding that metaphorical suitcase full of money on the train. You act on that essential greed. And if you're careful enough, you can use the site template or copies of the "winning ticket" with multiple marks over time. Just make sure it's not under investigation in case they report you.
- Dr. Spin

- They probably won't report it, though. Helping someone SINless commit what amounts to fraud is edging the law enough to scare most people out of seeking official help.
- Sticks

- The happened to me with a pair of scalped Seahawks tickets. Some people have no decency ...
- Slamm-0!

THE SPANISH PRISONER

"Hello! I am a Taingirian Prince, exiled from my Tír homeland, and I need your help ..." I can't believe that this old Matrix scam still exists, let alone that it works, but, hey, suckers keep being born. The premise is simple; Someone far away is powerful, but unable to access that power due to being a prisoner, in exile, laid up in a hospital, whatever. They offer to pay you handsomely for your aid if you will help them move some money around, or if you'll pay to bail them out so that they can reward you in person later. You wire them money, and usually that's all that you'll hear about it. Sometimes, they lure you in with more promises and pleas for help, but most are happy to get a single payment. Laugh all you want—if it didn't sometimes work, they wouldn't keep it running.

- It's all about volume. Send out a million of these forms for ten nuyen, all you need is a single bite to make a profit.
- Netcat

- In my younger days, I'd go sniff these guys out from their datatrails and prank 'em something fierce. These days, I just send a bot down the line and melt everything. I think I got lazy.
- Slamm-0!

- A good firewall will spot the patterns early on, but you're aiming for low-hanging fruit here, anyway.
- Glitch

- Runners never fall for this, though. Because we know a realTír noble will try to hire you through proxies. And then stab you in the back.
- Thorn

THE BADGER

A two-person scam that's pretty simple. (Get a good shill! They're worth their weight in credsticks!) One is the honeypot, seeking out a John and maneuvering them into a compromised position, at which point the other person catches them in the act, such as accidentally walking in while wearing an obvious recording device, like the older-model Renraku MyLife ™ Goggles. It wasn't a set-up, but an accident, but now the John's on the hook. If that recording gets out, they'll lose their job/marriage//promotion and that won't do at all. They agree to pay you off in exchange for the recording, then you and your partner split the cash later. If you're smart, that's where you cut it off. The greedy con artists lean in for a full-blown extortion, trying to bleed the mark dry. That path tends to bring in the cops—or just as bad, the mark gets crazy enough to pull a gun on you. Take the quick cash and run.

- Very, very true.
- Kat o' NineTales

ORICHALCUM SHUFFLE

POSTED BY: THORN

This is an umbrella term that covers a handful of classic scams dating back to the Fifth World classic "Thai gems." You'd get some sap of a tourist hauled around in a *tuk-tuk* run by one scammer, who'd just bounce him from helper to helper, all touting "duty-free" gems, suits, or other high-priced, supposedly high-quality, goods that the mark could not-quite-smuggle out of the country and then turn a huge profit. The dear, precious mark gets carted all about town by a smiling, friendly driver with adorably broken grammar (all making the mark feel that much more brilliant and in control of things), and they feel like they're finding deal after deal, all day long, because help-

ful strangers just keep telling 'em about some bureaucratic mess they can profit from. Then, finally, at a store run by yet another scammer, they cave in, make a tremendous pile of purchases at up-jumped prices, get gouged again for the shipping (and the rush to ship it straight home means they never go to a jeweler or the like to get their wondrous gems appraised until it's too late), and they never see the two-or-threefold return on investment they got talked into.

- Who'd fall for this crap?
- Slamm-0!

- Says the guy nobody even had to con into his wall of signed jerseys and other memorabilia, who just paid out the nose for all of it without encouragement.
- Netcat

It works. Consistently. I know some crews of a half-dozen aces who've have made a living off this gig for decades at a go, day in and day out. For it to work, though, you need three key traits, all of which need to see play, piled one atop the other.

First off, it's got to be a foreign enough setting for the traveler to feel alien and as such superior; you convince them the profits are coming from government loopholes, from finding strange ways to navigate export laws, and from using a duty-free gimmick that will work because it's a secret only the locals know about. Combined with the sense of exclusion (or superiority, or both) that travel abroad brings out in folks, heads can really spin as they dream of their new fortune. The first "chance" meeting might happen at a secluded temple, or an exotic restaurant or market full of strange smells; anyplace that makes the mark feel they're in a strange new land works. Second, you need a network of smiling, conspiratorial faces to make the mark feel like it's all going to work out to their benefit. Thailand worked, back in the day, because Westerners loved to plunder the exotic Orient, and because the Thai people had a reputation for being friendly and gregarious. That meant that these conversations—multiple talks, by multiple helpers, in multiple locations, all seeming to be independent confirmation of that initial deal—do not appear strange. You can spice it up with another foreigner or expat confirming the deal as their third, maybe fourth, "chance" encounter during the day, but mostly you want it to be locals, so the mark feels like they're in on a native secret. So you need a tourist-friendly country, where travelers feel safe and welcome.

Thirdly? You need something rare and expensive to attract the marks' attention.

- Actually, you don't. You want exotic, yeah, but if you're out to make a smaller buck, it doesn't need to be terribly rare or pricey. I bet we see this sort of con pick up in Seattle's Underground soon, offering "authentic orkish" booze or crap. You'll lack the long distance as insulation from disgruntled marks, but it's not like the average sarariman is gonna march into the Underground and demand his money back, either.
- Bull

That's where our modern twists come in. Since 2061, there's been a resurgence in this sort of scam, generally with a little spit-shine on that most precious of resources, orichalcum. Those natural veins dried up not long after they arrived, but the media marveled at their existence long enough and loud enough that prospectors are still hanging about Snowdonia to this day, licking their chops and swearing the good times'll roll again any second. Fifty-thousand nuyen a gram (give or take) also means that once a mark is hooked, you can make a lot of nuyen on this sort of gig. It might still be mundane gems on offer, but the real money in this scam comes from offering exotic magical goods. Raw orichalcum ore, artifacts of a lost culture, paracritter bits, telesma of all stripes. What matters is that what the sap gets in the box once he's back home is garbage worth a fraction of what he paid for it, rather than being the wondrous, local-exploiting bargain of the century he thought he was signing up for.

- Funny how you keep talking like it's a con you've run before.
- Turbo Bunny

- That's hardly a surprise. The sort of assignments Agent Thorn used to receive often encouraged ingratiating oneself with the local criminal populace, while also self-funding for extended operations. Given his other jobs, running a few cons is hardly the worst of his sins.
- Fianchetto

- Aww, you'll make me blush.
- Thorn

You'll see the Orichalcum Shuffle in places known to pander to fantasy-oriented travelers who feel like they're in a wondrously foreign place, in a local population naturally inclined toward friendliness and surface trustworthiness, and in a place known to cater to talismongers, alchemists, and the like.

- The most common version of counterfeit telesma I have ever seen is cockatrice legs. Every scam artist can sell regular chicken's feet with some dyes as valuable telesma, claiming that while they are plentiful and cheap here, they are worth a fortune back wherever the mark comes from.
- Lyran

Do the math, mate. Think about the handful of nations I just described—famously, overtly magical, full of

charismatic locals?—and don't go buying any orichalcum in Snowdonia or anyplace that starts with the word Tír.

- Isn't it kind of racist to basically call all elves naturally inclined con artists?
- /dev/grrl

- Not when we say it.
- Thorn

- Fraggin' elves.
- Bull

WORRIED WALLY

POSTED BY: COSMO

There are people who go home each night to a place with a solid roof, plenty of heat in the winter and cool air in the summer, and a refrigerator full of food. They also have never known the feeling of having someone single-mindedly focused on killing them. Yet they still talk incessantly about the stress they feel in their lives, the effects of this stress, and their need to reduce said stress. I'm not saying their stress isn't real—just that with their food and shelter taken care of, they have considerable time and mental energy to dedicate to the sources of stress they have in their life, sometimes thinking and obsessing about it, while the rest of us just focus on survival.

They also have enough of an awareness of how people like us live that they know if something happened that took away the life they're used to, if they no longer had a job that pays for their home and food, they would be ruined. Lost. Dead.

This means that when the foundation of their world shakes, they get worried, and when they get worried, they seek reassurance. Being good at a Worried Wally means two things: knowing how to find worried people, and knowing how to convince them that giving you money can make their worries go away.

The most common approach to pulling off this con is offering some sort certification of leadership opportunity that will make them feel like they've padded their résumé enough to avoid an upcoming round of layoffs. Leadership seminars are a common and easy way to earn some quick nuyen. Fake a few endorsements, spread some ads around, make sure you're offering some sort of bullshit certificate at the end of it, and you'll get a few suckers willing to drop a few hundred nuyen to listen to your business wisdom. Just be aware that word spreads, so once people realize you provided nothing useful in terms of preserving their job, they'll talk, it'll spread all over the Matrix, and you'll have trouble booking customers using that name. Switch to new names as needed.

- Some workers are smart enough to check on whether your seminar is endorsed by certain reputable professional organizations, so that they know you're legit. Good con artists are one step ahead of the game—at least one of these supposedly reputable organizations is a complete fake, endorsing only those who pay them enough money. It's a scam working to support other scams, and it's one of the beautiful things in this world.
- X-Prime

- I don't suppose you're going to share which association this is?
- Chainmaker

- Of course not. This is not the sort of knowledge you gain by asking for it.
- X-Prime

The laziest form of this scam is hoping a few suckers pay you upfront so you can skip town with the cash. The more dedicated version involves actually holding a seminar, hoping to attract walk-up traffic, or if you're really skilled, word-of-mouth traffic from people who attended your initial meeting. As long as people walk away feeling like they got some useful tips on how to work in whatever their business area is, you have a chance of getting some people dragging their friends to check out what you're offering, expanding your revenue possibilities.

Professional directories are another form of this scam. You find your Worried Wally, who is anxiously looking for some way to pad their résumé, and tell them they have been selected for inclusion in the prestigious Big Seriously Awesome Guide to Important People in Your Profession. All they have to do is send a brief bio, a headshot, and about a hundred nuyen, and boom, instant résumé boost. The most common versions of this scam involve putting out an actual electronic directory, or even a print book, since print is cheap (and you make marks pay extra for hard copies that they will keep or distribute to their networks). The books are worthless, of course, and not used by any serious HR people in their decision-making process, but they do in fact exist, and Worried Wallys often cling to them on their way to the unemployment line.

TRAPPED TRAVELER

POSTED BY: RED

I saw this one years ago on the Grand Tour. It's another way for natives to fleece tourists. You set up in a nice town, one of the Rivieras for example, and do one of two things: either make really good friends with the cops, or set up the means for a couple friends to play cop and make an area that looks and feels like a lockup. That means solid doors, monitoring equipment, ambient sounds, lighting, uniforms, the works. If you have real cops on your side, there's obviously less work going into it.

They sit pretty while you go out and do the scouting for a viable mark, going wherever tourists get friendly

with locals. You get close, buy them a few drinks, get to be their friend for the day, and find out who their local contacts are. If they don't have any, make sure they remember your name and number. Once you've selected the mark, you and your cop friends tail them and pick a good moment to make an arrest, either for a legitimate crime, or for some obscure statute they have allegedly violated ("No one is allowed in the memorial gardens between 12 and 1!" "This zone is for natives, only!" Snatch them up mid-love connection and claim they were soliciting). Drag them to their cell and let them stew for a little while. So much the better if they were drunk when you bring them in, so they are dizzy, hung-over, off-balance, and most importantly, confused. The cops say that unless someone local can vouch for him, he'll be considered a vagrant, effectively SINless, and there are such stiff penalties for the SINless committing crimes ...

They don't know anyone but you, so they call you in. You're all warm concern, and being familiar with this town, you know how things are handled here. "Justice is something of a business here," you say, "so if you can make a good offer, they'll just let you walk." When they get reluctant, you ask the cops who their judge will be. The answer won't be good. The local punishments should be something more than money, something physically threatening—whipping, caning, that sort of thing. They fold, they pay, and you either get them released, or see to it they head for a plane immediately. The latter works surprisingly well, since they want to escape their trauma, and there's something romantic about exile to a tourist. Either way, you give them a hearty warning that their information has been recorded, and if they set even one toe out of line in this area again, they'll be arrested and fast-tracked to conviction, with their information given to Interpol (even better if you drag their home corp into it, so the shame threatens to follow them back home). They'll hand over thousands of nuyen with a relieved smile, shaking your hand and swearing someday they'll find a way to pay you back.

- I've developed a surprising network of contacts from this kind of con.
- Thorn

- In some places, the cops do this outright. No need for a middleman. I've heard of security in Monaco doing it as a training exercise, with the would-be undercover or plainclothes running the op giving the scammed money to their superiors as a "gift."
- Traveler Jones

NAUGHTY NIGHTINGALE

POSTED BY: CARBON SCORE

I grew up going to a church with my grandma in midtown Detroit. Every week, Reverend Doctor James Kindley would preach that God is coming back soon to destroy the so-called Sixth World and all of its ills, magic being his primary target. After the sermon, folks from the congregation would line up by the dozens to get healed from their various illnesses. And I have to say, when I was ten, it was exciting to see God taking an active interest in the lives of small people. Of course, after the Awakening, when all sorts of people could heal you with magic, the faith healing traditions took a hit. But not Rev. Kindley. Here's how he did it, and how I learned to do it under his tutelage.

First, and this is the most important, you *must* distance yourself from magic. If possible, find a group already predisposed to hating the Awakened—the more fervent, the better. In Detroit, an industry and tech hub, this wasn't too hard. You have to beat the anti-magic drum at all times. God hates magic. Magic is Satan's only creation. Magic corrupts. Magic doesn't really heal, it just trades parts of your soul for temporary gain. That sort of stuff. The reason is this: You must have an internally consistent reason for your people to not seek out magic healing for their problems, and you must be able to give them an alternative.

This con doesn't work if you can actually heal them. They will simply see you as another Awakened huckster. Also, if you get a congregation of any size, you will draw skeptics who will assense you to see if you are Awakened right when they walk in. If you are, you're busted.

Second, if at all possible, ingratiate yourself with someone the congregation already respects. There is no single more attractive feature than having someone beside yourself, someone respected, endorse you as the Lord's servant. This is how I got involved. On a lark, I tried to heal someone at the church of a cold. Turns out, this lady was something of a hypochondriac, and my "healing" worked. Kindley took notice and took me under his wing. Be careful if you ever reach that point. If the pastor or leader who endorses you is also running the scam, you will be able to make nuyen out of your ears. This is what happened with Kindley and myself. But if that person is a true believer, you will have to figure out how to operate—or extract yourself—sooner or later.

Third, learn the tricks. Whenever possible, create the illness you are going to be healing. Dan Sporran was a guy who came up for healing one time a church, and I laid my hands on him, pronounced him whole and cancer-free, and sent him to his doctor for a checkup. And of course, the doctor gave him a clear bill of health, which he reported to the congregation, which ended up with record tithes. But the fact is, Dan never had cancer. I made that up.

Make a habit of asking the congregation to write down their fears and prayer requests on paper. Tell them you don't read them (I used to bring them up to the front, use sleight of hand to switch them with another bunch of paper, and burn them during the service). Then, read them and learn about their greatest fears. Dan's was cancer. So when he came by for prayer one day, I told him

of the vision I had, in almost his exact words, that he had cancer. I initially encouraged him not to see a doctor, but to continue praying. Over the next few weeks, he began complaining of pain and random symptoms, all of which set him up to be "healed" the next Sunday. Your people will trust you when you tell them something is wrong. Use that trust.

Fourth, use actors. Never do this with people who live in the same city. It is worth the investment to hire outside actors (or people passing through, or the homeless from two districts over). Pay them whatever they want to pretend to be veterans, car-accident victims, or even poor folks caught in the middle of a shadowrun. Tell them a long, drawn-out story (which drops their defenses), and they will be practically begging for you to heal them, and asking precisely zero questions when they get up and jump for joy. If they jump too much or run and fall, just blame it on being filled with the Lord's Spirit—don't admit they were actually drunk.

Fifth, and this one is a bit hard, but if people don't get healed, you must blame their faith. I did my best to screen people who I attempted to heal. Rev. Kindley taught me that. If someone with a missing limb comes up, or actual cancer, I had nothing. But every once in a while, someone with an actual problem snuck through. When this happened, I laid on my hands, pronounced them healed (or sent them away to be healed in the case of limbs), and sent them off. When they inevitably came back angry, I would turn it back on them and tell them that their unbelieving faith was causing interference with the healing God was trying to do. I'll admit, this was the hardest part. Even long after I made the mental switch in my mind from doing healing to purposefully conning people, I never left those conversations feeling like roses. Surprisingly, those folks kept coming back. They believe you when you say it is their fault, and most of the time, they start attending more and giving more, so God will listen.

Which leads me to number six: This isn't a forever job. You can't stay in one place more than a few years at very most. I got more out of it than normal, because the Rev. Dr. Kindley eventually skipped out on the congregation, raiding the church coffers on the way out. They initially blamed me as well, because I was his right-hand man, but eventually, they looked to me to take over his position. But make no mistake, this con has to end, so always have an exit strategy. This was hard for me, since I grew up in that neighborhood. I couldn't just walk away. So that's when I stepped into the shadows and started grifting. But the real pros at the Naughty Nightingale never use their real names, never run the con in their own backyard, and have allies who are running similar cons to hand out as references.

I can't say I endorse this one, as it really messes people up on a lot of levels, but as far as long cons go, it can be quite profitable. You'd be surprised how many high-level wageslaves are dying to turn their brains off and believe everything you say.

- Point six is particularly important. When you're not actually not healing people, at some point people tend to notice, and their faith—and donations—start to drop. Worse, they might incite arrests or riots.
- X-Prime

TECH SUPPORT

This one dates back to the days before the Matrix, when they used a Worldwide Superhighway of Tubes to be forward-thinking cavemen online. Nobody knew how computers worked back then, so they were easy to take advantage of. Fortunately for us, corporate drones never change. You call up a number in an office, say that you're from tech support, and state that you've found some problem on their terminal, and you need to walk them through it. Asking to verify their username and password is a simple way to get in, but having them follow a link to a Matrix site you have to phish that data out, or getting them to switch on a remote terminal that you can later hack, are all possible tactics. You just need a comm connection and a person who doesn't think twice when a corporate co-worker contacts them to help. Once you get a way into the system, well, you deckers know what to do.

- Nobody can be that stupid in this day and age.
- Sticks

- You have no idea.
- Slamm-0!

- You have *absolutely* no idea.
- Glitch

FAKE HANDYMEN

This job consists of a couple of guys showing up at your house, having "Done some work in the area" but finished up early or having extra supplies left over. They offer to do some work for you for cheap, but the big goal is to try to get inside your house. They'll walk around while talking, quietly casing the joint, until they get a basic layout. From there, they'll split up, with one asking to see your home Matrix hardware, your water heater, your fusebox, or whatever, then will radio to their partner to "watch the thing" and have you flip switches. They'll call back and forth about something happening, asking you if this happens or that, to try to keep you focused on whatever the "error" is. In the meantime, while one has you distracted, the other steals a few things of value, then signals back with a pre-determined code phrase, like, "Okay, I see the problem now," or "That's got it!", at which point the first person walks you back to his partner. They say that you can pay "whatever you think is fair", or suggest that they can come back later to fix it

properly, now that they know what the problem is. They add that they can give you a good deal since you were so kind. You don't know that you've been robbed until well after they've left.

- These guys are dicks.
- Butch

- Oh, does someone have a story to share? Tell! Tell!
- Slamm-0!

- I'll just say that two "plumbers" in my neighborhood now walk with a limp.
- Butch

- Oh, baby.
- Kat o' NineTales

- Not like that! I just introduced them to my old friend, Colt.
- Butch

- Such a peacemaker, that one.
- Man-of-Many-Names

- As a heads-up, this works for all kinds of pairings. Census takers, missionaries, trick-or-treaters, even joggers on a hot day. The key is to get inside the house and split up. "Which way to the bathroom?" works even better if you have a sickly child in your arms.
- Haze

- You really have no shame, do you?
- Pistons

THE 5-0

POSTED BY: DETECTIVE N. RYDER, LONE STAR SECURITY SERVICES

- Just for fun, I tapped an associate who's had the unfortunate luck of being assigned to work the beat in Chi-town. He may work for the Star, but he's good people (even though he's a bit of an asshole) and knows a thing or two about cons, especially ones used by those who are *supposed* to serve and protect.
- Bull

- "To Serve and Protect" became nothing more than a promotional gimmick a long time ago.
- Hard Exit

What? You mean to tell me that cops sometimes use trickery and guile to get what they want? And that some of them are ... corrupt! I'm shocked, *shocked* I say! And now that I got the obligatory snark out of the way, I'll get on with it. Even corrupt flat-foots like myself need our sleep if we're to fill our quota of oppressing the masses.

- At least he's honest.
- Pistons

So here's the deal: I give you hardened criminal types some tips and pointers on some of the various scam-like behavior that subcontracted civil servants like myself often use, and Bull quits inserting malicious spam code into my commlink and signing me up for various cop-fetish-based dating sites. I mean, there's nothing wrong with a little attention, but even I sometimes like to be appreciated for something besides the uniform.

- So that's how you tap someone for services, huh?
- Slamm-0!

- In-kind payment is still payment.
- Bull

"YOU'RE BUSTED!"

There's a saying in law enforcement: We usually catch the stupid ones. Despite what the popular trid shows and sims like to tell you, lots of the time, any halfway intelligent perp will get away. Yeah, modern tech and new techniques have narrowed the margin a bit, but the perps aren't hindered by little things such as policy, procedure, or threats from your superiors that if *one more building gets blown up* ... you get the picture.

Most of the time we don't know where Mr./Ms. Perp is, and even if we do, sometimes even going in with an SRT (or three) may not be the best of options. So you have to have a plan B ready to go, which sometimes involves convincing said perp to come to *you*. Now there is no specific way to make this happen, every perp and situation is different, but there are a few methods that, quite frankly, I'm surprised still work, even if just some of the time.

Oh and FYI, most of these are considered "dick moves." So don't blame the messenger.

There's been an accident. Despite what some may think, even the most hardened criminal or dangerous killer-type has someone they care about. They could be friends, relatives, immediate family, or gods forbid spouses and/or children. This involves usually finding said special person(s) and arrange for them to meet some minor form of misfortune that's more inconvenience and easily taken care of by a supervisor late on. For example, a fabricated bench warrant for multiple traffic tickets, a "few questions," or a simple case of mistaken identity. Either one would require the subject to come to the station to "get this straightened out." And while they're tucked away and slugging through a virtual swamp of paperwork, the word is put out that said special person ended up in the

local hospital for any number of fatal circumstances and of course, they only have a short time to live. If this works, the perp actually goes to the hospital and we bust them. I once played the role of elderly accident victim, complete with some gnarly prosthetics and makeup. The perp nearly drekked himself when he heard the shotgun rack a round under my covers.

Good times.

But note that pulling off this, or any sting for that matter, usually requires a lot of prep time, especially when it comes to getting the word out. You need to make sure that whatever network you have is able to effectively *get* the message where it needs to go. Confidential informants or people who owe you favors are good for this.

- Yeah, because we know that the Star or any other law dog has *never* used busted runners to do their dirty work for them. Yeah, he's right. This *is* a dick move.
- Haze

- But apparently effective.
- Fianchetto

You Just WON ... I won't lie, this one can be kind of fun. We normally do this on mid- to lower-tier, or low-risk perps when we need to clear out the backlog of minor cases. The concept is pretty simple. We find whatever comm-code they're using at the time and have our resident hacker fabricate a notification (complete with all appropriate data trails) saying that the perp has just won something pretty neat. Game systems, a new fancy commlink, a new vehicle, and once a date with a popular local celebrity.

The only catch is that they have to show up in person to collect their winnings.

No, I'm serious, this actually works. Not all of the time, but out of say one hundred or so notifications we put out for this kind of sting, we get at least fifty or sixty hits. Never underestimate the power of stupidity and or greed.

- Can't believe I actually agree with a Star.
- Borderline

Sometimes, it's just as simple as renting out a small office that we've converted to look like a winnings clearinghouse. Other times we go all out, make it into one big party. Food, drinks, entertainment. I remember one time we had the local Taco Temple cater it. Not so great for the old digestive tract afterwards, but hey, that's the price for justice! Okay, that one left a bad taste in my mouth. Moving on.

Once the perp is on scene, all the window dressing is meant to sell the idea that this is legit, that they're really there to get a prize and not that they're about to be taken into police custody. Depending on the class of perp, we tend to also have a lot of other officers there in-character as either party staff, office staff, or whatever is appropriate to the scenario we've set up. Because sometimes, they get there, get wise, and try to run. It happens, but often they're so overwhelmed and psyched to get their promised prize that common sense goes right out the window. Once they're on site, they are usually "taken in back" to get what's coming to them.

- KE once tried something similar on an associate of mine, likely thinking that because he was a troll, he'd be stupid and fall for it. Well, they were half right. He showed up for their little party loaded for bear and purposely sprung the trap for fun. He managed to geek at least four officers and wounded at least a dozen more before he was taken down.
- Sounder

- The good detective also fails to mention that sometimes, the law agency in question will spike the drinks and food with something like Narcoject or some other sedative and immediately offer the target one as soon as they arrive. Pro tip: If you don't see anyone else eating or drinking, stay away. That goes for any situation.
- Hard Exit

The Policeman's Ball. It's no secret that the path to financial riches flows nowhere near police work, at least honest police work. Given how most cops are overworked, outgunned, and outclassed by many of the criminals we're supposed to apprehend, it's little wonder when my fellow officers become bitter at the prospect of having nothing but a miserable pension awaiting them after retirement. That's assuming they even make it that long. I harbor no illusions—the corporate bean counters shed no tears when an officer dies, as it means less overall burden on the company. And don't get me started on the joke that's our so-called "benefits."

Okay, raw nerve, sidetracked, back on point.

And that point is that even the most honest and dedicated officer is susceptible to a little graft here and there. Most of the time it's something simple like a free lunch, or a "police discount" at the local stores and shops. But there's one scam that officers have been doing almost as long as there've been cops to earn a little extra for their personal retirement funds. It's gone by many names over the decades, but most today know it as the Policeman's Ball.

So how does it work? Well, pretty simple actually. It's akin to a basic shakedown, but instead of brute force or intimidation, the officer uses two of the best tools we have to make someone comply: our authority and our ability to make a person's life very, very difficult.

First thing an officer looks for is an appropriate mark. The best marks for this are those who are already criminals with a record, the SINless who got pinched while

using a fake SIN, or those who are completely ignorant as to the nuances of modern jurisprudence. Once the mark has been identified, the officer usually finds some way to make contact with said mark. The most common way is during a traffic stop. Not only is the mark suddenly on the defensive, but even those who are innocent (heh) are quite eager to get the encounter over with. Advantage: cop. But the traffic stop isn't the only way to make contact. With many areas requiring the broadcasting of SINs/ID, it's more than easy (and justifiable) for a less-than-honorable officer to make a random SIN check.

From there it's pretty simple: The officer tells the mark they're gonna issue some kind of citation or that they're obligated to take them in for questioning. Now most hardened criminal types would laugh at this, and in some cases, bash the officer's face in. Hopefully, said officer has enough brain power to know or at least recognize the difference.

But John/Jane Q. Public, whose only knowledge of the criminal-justice system comes from bad trids and sims, is a bit more easily swayed. And so, being the kind and understanding officer that they are, they tell the mark that they're more than willing to give them a break, if they're willing to help out other officers by buying tickets or donate to the upcoming Policeman's Ball. I mean, why wouldn't they? The mark is being given a break and the ball *is* for charity after all (think of the children!). And it's not a bribe, it's a *donation*.

- I've lost track of how many tickets to the ball I've bought over the years. In some areas, if you know what cops like to work this angle, sometimes you can get on with your business that much faster if you play it frosty and offer to buy tickets or donate before the cops ask.
- Danger Sensei

- All part of doing business.
- Stone

This can all go away. While the Policeman's Ball can be relatively harmless (heh), there're cops who take that basic idea and give it a twist. Imagine being any one of the marks I've previously described. Now, say that you're not being stopped for running a red light or having a broken tail light. Let's say that you've been indulging in some kind of vice or behavior that would make whatever boss or corporate master very disappointed at your current actions.

And to make matters worse, you've just got busted by the fuzz.

F to the R to the A and G.

Now you're freaking out, your life is over, you're gonna lose whatever it is that you treasure the most. You're sitting there, either where you got busted, or in some interrogation room sitting across from some rather surly looking detective-type. You're not sure how this happened, you took what you thought were the necessary precautions. And yet, your worst nightmare is coming true right before your eyes.

And just when you think that all hope is lost, said detective looks you in the eyes and tells you that there's a way out of this, that they can "make this all go away." But in return, there's something that they want. Seeing no other alternative, the mark agrees.

What they don't realize is that they were set up from the start.

This is a common tactic when detectives need something from those who are somewhat uncooperative, usually hostile witnesses or new confidential informants. What, you thought good CIs do it out of the kindness of their hearts? First, like any con, the mark is identified. Then they are investigated and monitored. Their daily routine, habits, vices—all that good stuff is monitored and recorded to determine the best leverage to be used against them.

For example, I knew of a few detectives back in Boston who liked to frequent the local bunraku parlors. After securing permission with the local oyabun, they would target anyone who would either pay outrageous amounts of money to sweep their indiscretions under the rug, or who would make good pawns in their ongoing games. Remember "the network" for the scams mentioned earlier? This is one way to create that network.

Once the leverage is determined, then the pressure is applied. If all goes well, the mark is snared and at the detective/officer's mercy. From there, they are usually given a choice: go to that small dark place I previously mentioned or offer to "help." In exchange, any records of wrongdoing or criminality will disappear.

But does it? I'll be honest, it usually doesn't. Why let a perfectly good asset get away? I'll admit, I've had to do it a few times, but I hate it.

- See, told you. Except that it never happens. There's always one more favor, one more job that needs to be done. This is just another example of corruption and indentured servitude.
- Haze

- Oh please, save your righteous indignation. We know what side of the morality fence you're on. And I know more than a few people here who would love to see you under the law's thumb.
- Pistons

Well, that's all I'm gonna dish out for now. I can't tell you all of my tricks, because I need whatever advantage I can get on the streets to keep my head right where it is and my guts where they belong. Not that I really think I'm gonna last too much longer. Lots of stuff going on, but that's hopefully for another post.

- Ya know, this bloke may not have given us much, but I will say he has given me more than a few ideas. Anyone know where I can get some uniforms and some fake credentials?
- Chainmaker

VAMPING

POSTED BY: RED

Yeah, yeah, the title. Look, this is old-school, and fairly obvious. I've heard it called a Trapdoor Spider, a Wounded Soldier, and a Poison Rose. Any of those make sense once you see what it's for.

The basic concept is to make yourself look vulnerable when you aren't. It's sort of like the Badger, but this is more likely to pull in real assholes. Pick someone to play honeypot. You might dress in rags, or like a prostitute, or even in really nice clothes in the barrens. Make yourself attractive to the sort who will pull a weapon on you. Sooner or later, someone is going to start some shit.

The twist? You're a vampire. Wait, no, that's just me. You probably have a crew in hiding around the area. I know a working girl in Puyallup who is pals with a damn fine marksman. A guy starts some trouble, and he finds a laser dot on his chest. Now he's paying up to leave alive. Some enterprising Crimson Crush pledges came up with the idea to have a helpless-looking ork stumble through territory where Humanis thugs will come to harass them. The skinhead makes a move, and they pounce, and the Crush come out looking like the neighborhood watch instead of gangers.

The critical moving pieces here are someone to act as bait, and the muscle to ambush them when someone comes calling. Violence happens more often than not. The benefit here is that it pulls assholes and predators in, making this a hooder or vigilante's favorite. The drawback is that it's not a very profitable enterprise, in terms of immediate cash. Infected like it because it offers some salve to the conscience, and our abilities mean we might not even need the backup for ambush. Ghoul packs in particular have been known to do this to keep the streets safe ... well, safer. For the rest of you, there's the benefit of gear and commlinks, other stuff you can move. For the truly cold-blooded, I've heard of some folks who slice up the predator and sell the pieces to Tamanous.

Theoretically this can be used anywhere, anytime, but there are a few basic rules to keep in mind if you want to ensure maximum safety and minimum risk of getting caught or overpowered.

- **Choose your territory.** The neighborhood, borough, street, corporate lease, or gang turf are all pretty important to consider when you're staking out your hunting grounds, if only because they're the ones most likely to show up to ruin your gig. No place in the world exists in true anarchy; there's always someone who enforces the "law," whatever that law may be. Knowing who does it will give you an idea who is coming, how long it'll take them, and what kind of heat they'll bring. It's one thing to tussle with some Cutters, and quite another to find a Knight Errant Riotmaster rolling up, loaded for bear.
- **Choose your terrain.** In the wild, hunters who work through ambush are very selective about where they do it. From spiderwebs to wolf packs, nature shows that the key to a successful hunt is knowing the lay of the land. You need your bait to be visible to your prey, but you want viable cover for your ambushers. You want to know any means they might escape by, or how they might bring in backup. Will they have a clear connection to call for backup? If the local law comes, can you see them coming? How long would they take to arrive? How would you get away? And then there's the tactical considerations. Do you have a sniper? A mage? How will you strike fast and hard before they can react? And how can you use the buildings, sewers, or even trees to accomplish this?

- Trees? Where the hell are you staging these ambushes?
- Haze

- Never done a smuggler run, huh? I've seen this done on routes, sometimes to waylay specific packages. Hell, I've shown some leg and stuck out my thumb to pull it off, myself.
- Turbo Bunny

- That's a classic on any roadway. Get a car that has "broken down," wait for some poor slob to come and help, and take him for all he's worth.
- Haze

- **Choose your prey.** Picking your prey means deciding on the kinds of rewards you want, and the risks that come with it. Sniping suits is all good and well, but they are more likely to have a DocWagon contract, and corp types are never all that far from Knight Errant, Lone Star, or whoever else protects the rich. Worse, they are less likely to have credsticks or other easy currency. More often they have quality luxury goods you might be able to pawn off, assuming you don't mind the resulting manhunt. Safer prey involves hunting the hunters, the types who pick on old ladies and kids and the like. More likely to have cred and weapons, less likely to draw the law, but the payout is lower, as well, and they put up more of a fight.

Speaking for myself, it is incredibly gratifying when I drop a disguise spell and a would-be mugger or rapist sees red eyes and long fangs.

- Wait, rapist?
- Ethernaut

- Who says I always look like a guy?
- Red

The downside of this kind of op is revenge. Scum tend to form fraternities. Vengeful ones. Sooner or later moonlighting as a vigilante brings them looking for you. It's no way to make a living unless you've decided to declare war on crime in general, and that eventually finds you in your sleep, one way or the other. What it *can* do is pull in gangers if you're working for a side in a war, snatch prisoners for bounties or interrogation (maybe you're trying to find Mr. Johnson's son who ran off to play ganger pledge, or you want to know where the Halloweeners keep the loot, or when the Ancients' next big shipment is). Like most cons, it's a niche maneuver, but ultimately it boils down to an ambush with bait, and that's a pretty solid tactic.

- Make sure no one mentions it outside of the con, though. Someone figures out the con, they'll bring friends who are planning on thwarting the ambush, and then you are toast.
- Borderline

DRAGON SLAYING

This one is a protection scam similar to Vamping. The name comes from an old fairy tale where a young dragon is terrorizing a small village, eating their livestock, burning their crops, and so on. A knight rides in and says the town can hire him to slay the dragon for an exorbitant price. The knight fights and apparently slays the dragon, collects his fee, and rides off into the sunset. What the villagers don't realize is that the dragon and the knight were working together and splitting the profits. The pair go from village to village running the same con and raking in the gold.

In the old days, this type of con was pretty rare. Exterminators would occasionally release roaches or rats into a building and then sell their services eliminating the problem they caused. Nowadays with magic and sapient paracritters in the mix, this con is a whole lot more practical. The most common modern application is the False Exorcism. A mage will summon up a spirit and have it cause mischief in an old building. Then the mage will come by offering to remove the troublesome spirit for a price. Mundanes will sometimes pull the same gimmick using tech like hidden trid projectors and speakers.

- I doubt anyone has actually teamed up with a dragon for something as simple as this. Their cons are on a whole other scale.
- Frosty

- The best part of this trick is the mark usually never realizes they have been duped. They may even be grateful for the assistance and recommend you to their friends.
- Icarus

- I heard of a guy in Puyallup who had a team of trained Bandits he would sic on businesses. He got paid to remove them and kept whatever they stole to boot.
- 2XL

KITTEN CALL

POSTED BY: CARBON SCORE

A pretty basic bait and switch. You place an ad out for a popular breed of animal, usually a kitten or puppy, but sometimes a trendy genetweaked critter, advertising it at less than market price. You have a sob story of some kind, from it belonging to an ex that you can't look at without thinking of them, or new zoning regulations not allowing you to own a pet, whatever, which explains why it's priced to go. You get the money sent to you, then you fail to deliver. When pressed, it's time for a new story, such as needing more for shipping, trying to get a bit more out of the mark. You can run this on a dozen or more people at once, offering the same animal to each (assuming that there really is an animal, of course!), gathering as much as you can before cutting and running on the whole thing. The basic scam can use anything for the item-to-sell, and gives way to the Caribbean Girlfriend scam later. Keep in mind, when you're dealing with wire fraud and Matrix advertisement, you're messing around with federal penalties, not small-time crime. Stick to local sales networks if you're not ready to play with the big boys.

- A fun version is to offer free kittens or puppies, then collect the LTG numbers of callers. Offer to meet them somewhere that's a bit of a drive away. When they arrive, drop a note that you're running late and for them to wait there for a few minutes. When you never show up, they give up and go home ... which is when they find out that the whole point was to arrange things so that they wouldn't be home, where you and your gang could break in and rob them. It was so nice of them to tell you exactly when they'd leave and for how long, wasn't it?
- Clockwork

THE BIG STORE

POSTED BY: RED

Originally known as the Dollar Store, the terminology for this one has changed over time but the core concept remains. One of the things that stands between a con going good and one going bad is location. Sure, you can dress right and work on the accent to be some Quebecois investor, but when the mark joins you for a business meet-

ing at a roach-infested motel, you lose the aura that you needed to win their confidence. The Big Store addresses that by setting up a place of business, or "legitimate business," through which you can handle the rest of the scam.

The Dollar Store started thanks to a guy named Ben Marks (hah!), over in New York. He figured out that there were enough people in the city that he could set up a repeat fishing operation, draining money from one sucker after another, without having to pack up and move every so often like the usual grifters. The scheme was simple; he rented a storefront, filled it with cheap merchandise at a cheaper price, then once he got them into his "Everything costs one dollar" store, he'd direct them to either a game of three-card monte being played nearby or, later, "accidentally" let them see a poker game going on illegally (It was against the law to gamble back then. Ain't that a riot?) that he'd let them in on as long as they didn't squeal to the cops. The profit from the scams was more than the rent plus the money he lost on the sale of goods, but since he was running a legitimate business, it kept the heat off him. In short order, the idea was picked up and has been with us ever since.

The more modern version tends to follow a related, but different, pattern. Instead of setting up shop for the long term, you and your team build a business that looks stable but is just there for a few months, long enough to draw in a whole group of marks to fleece. Most days, these are Ponzi-style schemes, where the initial investors are given nice payouts for buying shares in the company, which gets them to convince other people to invest. You use the money from that round of investment to pay the initial guys back, who bring in another round, and you use their money to pay the second round, until you have enough cash to make the whole thing a win for you and the guys, then you turn out the lights, close the doors, and slip away in the middle of the night, leaving the marks with worthless paper. You can roll about anything into the machine here, from building some kind of wonderful gadget to an ad agency that gets glowing reviews (written up by your own people), to a seasonal toy store. What matters is the front looks legit and that the cash can flow in without producing results.

- Knew a group doing this in Nigeria. They set up a bank, complete with a vault, tellers, the whole nine meters. They had business cards printed up, name plates, the works.
- Stone

- So, what happened?
- /dev/grrl

- Turns out that they made so much money that they kept it running as a real bank. Still open today, but they've got branches in eleven cities. I keep an account open there, for when I continent-hop.
- Stone

- Quick rule of thumb for you: If you ever have an interview for a job at a McHugh's, but it's not to work at that McHugh's? You're being scammed. A legit source of employment will always have an office.
- Butch

- Even some illegitimate sources of employment have one.
- Icarus

CHILDREN OF THE CON

Many of the things learned in the world of con artists have crossover appeal and, in fact, gave birth to many of the things you know and love today. Con artists and carnies have been intertwined since the idea of a traveling show was invented, and if you want a master-class on how to get money from marks, spend a year with them. Vaudeville was from a more legitimate bent, taking the Dancing Pig skills and charging to see them performed, rather than ripping them off. Well, okay, the cost of food and drink at the concessions stand is downright criminal, but you know what I mean. Stock market investors, used-car salesmen, and high-pressure salesmen have used our techniques (clumsily) for decades, as have politicians and faith healers. Again, any time someone wants to separate you from your valuables, be it cash or a vote, while giving you something less value in return, they're drawing on the con.

- At least criminals are honest about it. Politicians promise the moon but just line their own pockets.
- 2XL

- Still bitter about the election last year?
- Beaker

- You know, there's a whole download about this, called *Dirty Tricks*. You should check it out.
- Bull

That the immoral messages of "Nothing's fair, kid," and "The business of this business is to make money" are then topped with the big lie of "Well, you have a legal requirement to maximize stockholder profit" to make the core of the business community, which draws from, or in some areas was created by, old hucksters. Once you split the idea of your job being to, you know, produce goods or services, and realize that it's all about gathering money, then it's a short hop, skip, and a jump to convince yourself that the marks knew what they were getting into and that anything you do in the name of more money is fine. Take a look at the music industry sometime, where the moguls take advantage of kids, giving them horribly lop-sided contracts, selling the idea of "living the dream" while squeezing every drop of profit out of them. When that stone's run dry, they toss it aside and get a new one.

- The basic three-album deal gives rise to the idiom, "You have a lifetime to make your first album. You get two years to make the second." Most bands are lucky to have three hits, many only get one, and most don't even get that. As long as you're under contract to a label, you can't move elsewhere, so they get the best, most creative aspects of you. You get moved around as a prop while they collect big bank from venue ticket sales, merchandise, and concessions, while you wind up being billed for the production of your music sim, the tour bus or plane, and so on. Back a century ago, the biggest-selling girl band anyone had ever seen, TLC, went bankrupt while at the top of the charts from how much money they owed their label for the privilege of going on tour and selling their album for their corporate masters. They weren't the first, nor will they be the last.
- Kat o' NineTales

- Sports are similar. Sure, Ghettokid McSuperkick rises from the ruins of Rio to become an international star, but the team owners get a share of every endorsement deal. A sports star can get rich, but the old guy who signs his checks is *wealthy*. "Here ya go, kid. Buy yourself another Hypercar. I'm going to use my share for a new factory."
- Icarus

- Ouch, chummer. That was low, even for you.
- Slamm-0!

- It should go without saying that the world of advertising is tied in with this. The one that hurts me the most is Big Pharma, where they create a pill, then convince you that you have whatever it is that the pill cures. That's doing medicine backwards and it flies in the face of all that we doctors are supposed to hold sacred.
- Butch

- What did I just say? They're not in the business of saving lives, they're in the business of making a profit. Pills are just the product, while "helping mankind" is the big lie that sells the con. They're not there to heal the sick, they're there to exploit them.
- Icarus

- See? This guy gets it.
- Haze

- God, I feel sorry for you sometimes, Icarus. What must it be like to live in a world without hope?
- Bull

- Open your window and tell me.
- Icarus

GATS AND GLAD RAGS

POSTED BY: RED AND FRIENDS

I like doing my runs stealthy. Zero residual presence. Problem is, I'm not a decker, and it's way too easy to be seen when you're sneaking, no matter how many invisibility spells and concealing spirits you put on a ruthenium-polymer-covered ninja. I'm not a ninja by a long shot. What I *can* do is talk my way through most anything. So I like to hide out in the open. A few quick words and some better-than-high-school drama skills will fast-talk you past more than you think. But the corps know that racket, and the new world order of AR and RFID chips in everything means you need more than social-engineering skills. You need the toys as well as the techniques if you want to get through with a smile.

You'll notice that a lot of these toys and techniques are about deception, misdirection, and the like. We can blame the mark all we want, we can say the fault lies with their too-easy trust and their desire to get something they haven't earned, but at the heart of any con is a lie. Not that there's anything wrong with that—we have to survive, and if it takes a little dishonesty, so be it. I'm saying this to explain why the things here are what they are, not condemn the people using them.

To that end, and for the sake of the ever-charming Slamm-0!, I've put together a few chummers to provide some discussion about some of the best toys we could dig up. Why share the spotlight? Because social engineering is the kind of art that demands a whole lot of empathy (that's the ability to relate to and think like other people, you lovable sociopaths), which means different perspectives. A con can be run from a lot of angles, and a team covers those angles a lot better than one lone guy.

Also, I miss how Shadowland did things in the '50s, with product catalogues and everyone chiming in. Now *that* was shopping!

- Tell me about it.
- Bull

WEAPONS

MORTIMER OF LONDON 'BELGRAVE' SWORD CANE

The Belgrave is part of the same product line as the "Trafalgar" Gun Cane. A hidden release on the cane allows you to draw out a short, rapier-style blade. Concealment modifiers are +0 for the whole cane and -6 to determine its true nature.

'BELGRAVE' SWORD CANE (BLADES)					
ACC	REACH	DAM	AP	AVAIL	COST
5	1	(STR+3)P	-2	8	450¥

- Stupid. Stupid stupid. Fucking worthless. One shot, not accurate, not powerful. I can think of a dozen better ways to smuggle some harm into a party than this piece of shit. Even the hardware is screwed up! Sure, it's got scanblock, but any guard is going to take a second to check for the latches and triggers on a cane for a gun or, more practically, a sword. It's useless.
- /dev/grrl

- Not entirely. You're thinking from the perspective of the would-be infiltrator or assassin. For the mark, it's rather handy. The advantage here is surprise. If you're the host of the party, and some shadowscum come looking to nab you, you can blast them with the cane, often at close range, because while a guard will have the time, means, and incentive to check a cane for concealed weapons, a runner won't. That concealment will hide it from any sensors they smuggle in with them. You shouldn't buy this for a run, but you should look out for it.
- Thorn

- Hey, the Mortimer of London Belgrave is pretty good. You can get custom heads with their own unique release catches, and the scanblock and materials are a lot harder to detect. Plus, it's a decent way to get a weapon focus into a run, which is pretty damn important for some runners.
- Red

- I've seen a few of those. Seriously, a lot of designs, but pretty classy, if you're into that. Designer imposters aren't as well-made, but you might see a pimp in the barrens with one.
- Kat o' NineTales

HAMMERLI 620S

This sleek and stylish light pistol has a lot of power for its size, but its modest profile won't overly alarm security personnel. It also matches an Armanté Suit perfectly.

Standard Accessories: Integral Gas-Vent 1, Smartlink. Uses Heavy Pistol ranges (p. 185, *SR5*).

HAMMERLI 620S (LIGHT PISTOL)							
ACC	DAM	AP	MODE	RC	AMMO	AVAIL	COST
5(7)	6P	—	SA	1	6(c)	8R	325¥

- This gun has always been sexy. Not a lot of pow, but it looks so good that it can count as an accessory, particularly if you play on sexist guards and you're in a Little Black Dress. Sometimes they even get by with empty clips by would-be badasses at the right parties.
- Kat o' NineTales

- That fashionable aspect has made it de rigueur for bodyguards the world over. The fact that it is accurate and low impact helps local security and employers feel better about potential friendly fire.
- Thorn

- It's even better when you consider the bodyguard is probably going to load it with Stick-n-Shock or chem rounds. You don't need impact, but the accuracy and range come in handy.
- /dev/grrl

- All this also means it's a lot easier to get past security. It also also means it can score some points with the upper crust. These see a lot of use in sports or target shooting. GrandTour stuff for the right crowd.
- Red

YAMAHA SAKURA FUBUKI SX

This is the updated version of the classic "Cherry Blossom Storm." The newest version has slightly lower ammo capacity but is more reliable, compact, and features better handling. It retains the "magazine barrel" design with the two-by-two barrel configuration of the original, allowing it to fire semi-automatic bursts as well as single regular semi-automatic use.

Standard Accessories: Electronic Firing (figured into Recoil Compensation)

YAMAHA SAKURA FUBUKI SX (LIGHT PISTOL)							
ACC	DAM	AP	MODE	RC	AMMO	AVAIL	COST
6	6P	—	SA/BF	1	8(ML)x4	10R	750¥

- I think these are stupid as hell.
- /dev/grrl

- Why do you hate everything?
- Red

- The shot profile is obvious after the fact, the ammo flies out too quick, and if you need to fire four bullets at a time you suck at shooting. And what the hell are you supposed to do, screw four separate silencers on the damn thing?
- /dev/grrl

- For some parties, more bullets is a selling point.
- Thorn

- The profile is pretty trendy, too. It comes with mod kits like street cars, with would-be tough gals and guys fitting it to look like something from cheap sci-fi. Flashing lights, sound effects, even exhaust mods for colored gunsmoke. I saw one that started playing "Die Time" every time you pulled the trigger.
- Kat o' NineTales

- I'm sure a gun that blares Goblin Rock whenever it is fired appeals to a certain kind of buyer.
- Thorn

- The kind who gets themselves and their team killed.
- /dev/grrl

NEMESIS ARMS PRAETORIAN

This heavy pistol is not for those who prefer the subtle approach. Each pistol comes with an integral bayonet and an internal laser sight. The manufacturer offers a wide array of customization options from chrome to gold filigree to electroluminescent accents, as well as seventeen different blade styles for the bayonet.

Standard Accessories: Bayonet, Custom Look, Laser Sight

NEMESIS ARMS PRAETORIAN (HEAVY PISTOL)							
ACC	DAM	AP	MODE	RC	AMMO	AVAIL	COST
4(6)	8P	-1	SA	—	12(c)	9R	700¥

- The Praetorian was originally produced with a smartlink standard. Market research showed that the people who were buying it weren't exactly the type to make full use of the tactical advantages of a smartlink. They preferred the inherent intimidation factor of pointing a laser sight at someone and letting them think about exactly where they were about to get shot. Again, ganger crap.
- /dev/grrl

- Not all runs are in a corporate lab, you know. Sometimes this kind of blatant one-upmanship really works.
- Red

- It can certainly help with blending in.
- Thorn

- Forget about concealing the damn thing, though. It wasn't made for it, and it can't be made to do it. Just too flash. You'd have better luck fitting a sawed-off shotgun in your coat.
- Kat o' NineTales

- I'll give it this: it punches a damn big hole in whatever you hit.
- /dev/grrl

STINGER PEN GUN

This gun is a simple one-shot holdout inside a pen or digital stylus (Concealability -4).

STINGER GUN (HOLDOUT)							
ACC	DAM	AP	MODE	RC	AMMO	AVAIL	COST
4	6P	—	SS	RC	1(b)	6R	325¥

- This falls into spycraft and assassination more than anything. Good for making an escape or taking down a mark. Unfortunately, you can't fit a silencer into the mechanism, so once it goes off, everyone knows.
- Thorn

- You can stuff your pockets with these things and smuggle them in. Bang bang bang. Best part is, if they take you prisoner, they never think you'd be carrying more than one.
- /dev/grrl

INJECTOR PEN

This pen or stylus conceals a hypodermic needle that can inject one dose of a drug or toxin.

INJECTOR PEN (EXOTIC MELEE)					
ACC	REACH	DAM	AP	AVAIL	COST
4	—	As drug/toxin	-2	9F	220¥

- I find these more practical than the pistol version. Silent and versatile, ideal for knocking a target out discreetly, lethal or non-lethal. Dosed with laes, it has even more uses.
- Thorn

- Stick one on the end of a medusa drone, and your hand-to-hand gets a lot scarier.
- /dev/grrl

- It's also an interesting way to get beneficial chems in places you couldn't get them otherwise. I hear some corp drones with drug habits use them to get their fix at work during eighteen-hour work days.
- Red

- I imagine you could put some alchemical mixes in there, too.
- Red

PEPPER PUNCH PEN

This pen/digital stylus contains a small pepper punch canister. It is commonly sold to wageslaves who shy away from firearms as a discreet means of self-defense against muggings. It can be re-purposed to hold any inhalation vector toxin or drug. The range of the spray is two meters.

PEPPER PUNCH PEN (EXOTIC RANGED)							
ACC	DAM	AP	MODE	RC	AMMO	AVAIL	COST
3	As pepper punch	—	SS	—	1(1)	7	45

MODIFIED SPRAY PEN (EXOTIC RANGED)							
ACC	DAM	AP	MODE	RC	AMMO	AVAIL	COST
1	[illegible] toxin	—	[illegible]	—	[illegible]	4F	60¥ + drug/ toxin

- This is pretty standard on the bar scene for anyone worried about somebody who won't take no for an answer. Works pretty well, all things considered.
- Kat o' NineTales

- The modified version can make an excellent surprise weapon when you are cornered.
- Thorn

- Remember these the next time you have an overly loyal wageslave at gunpoint. Even a drone can sting.
- /dev/grrl

SAP CAP

This appears to be a standard baseball cap, but it has a pouch of lead powder sewn into the back. By gripping the brim, the wearer can make it function as a sap. It can be extremely difficult for an observer to determine this is a weapon. A Perception (3) Test is required to notice it is not a normal hat.

SAP CAP (CLUBS)					
ACC	REACH	DAM	AP	AVAIL	COST
4	—	(STR+2)P	—	4	120¥

- These are really popular when sports riots start to get mean.
- Kat o' NineTales

- Is there any armor value in these?
- Red

- Not really. The lead is not designed to absorb shock, just apply it.
- Kat o' NineTales

- InTír na nÓg, it's known as "tipping your hat" to someone.
- Thorn

LAPEL DAGGER

Small, flat, synthetic composite, non-metallic dagger made to slip underneath the lapel of a jacket or along the seam of an outfit. Low damage but highly concealable (-4 Concealability modifier) and undetectable by MAD scanners.

LAPEL DAGGER (BLADES)					
ACC	REACH	DAM	AP	AVAIL	COST
4	—	(STR+1)P	-1	5	100¥

- Shades of the Scarlet Pimpernel.
- Red

- The what?
- /dev/grrl

- Way before your time.
- Red

- Seriously, how old are you?
- Kat o' NineTales

- Relax. It's way before my time, too. I just like the classics.
- Red

- I only ever saw the trid with Richard E. Grant.
- Thorn

- You could use the same trick the way he did for manual lock picks, too.
- Red

PAINADE

Officially called the Fichetti Pain Induction Area Denial Grenade, this item was quickly nicknamed the Painade by law enforcement and news agencies. The device uses the same microwave technology as the Fichetti Pain Inducer; anyone in the field the grenade generates feels like their skin is on fire. Treat this as a toxin attack with a Power of 8 and a speed of Immediate. The target resists with Body + Willpower. If the modified Power exceeds the target's Mental limit, the target must spend his next Action Phase doing whatever it takes to run away from the pain. If the target cannot get out of the field, he is incapacitated with pain, suffering a dice pool modifier equal to the modified Power on all tests for as long as they are within the area of the grenade's effect. The grenade projects this field for 5 Combat Turns, but miniaturization of the emitter causes the electronics to fry after use.

PAINADE (GRENADE)				
DAM	AP	BLAST	AVAIL	COST
4	—	(STR+1)P	-1	5

- This is a such an asshole weapon.
- Red

- You think so?
- Thorn

- Pumping out microwaves with an expensive gadget to cause so much pain that it subdues a target? Yeah, that's fucked up.
- Red

- Even more so when you consider they are used by riot cops for civilian pacification.
- /dev/grrl

- Give me a freeze foam grenade any day.
- Red

- Not all of us can turn to mist to escape them.
- Thorn

- Shhhh, you'll give all my best tricks away!
- Red

ARMOR

ARMORED TEAM JERSEYS

Because you never know whose turf you are tailgating in. Available for most sports but most popular with urban brawl teams that traditionally have the rowdiest fans (read: most likely to riot). + 1 Social limit for tests involving fans and hometown locals, -1 Social limit for tests involving fans of rival teams.

UNLICENSED TEAM JERSEY (SPECIALTY ARMOR)			
ARM	CAP	AVAIL	COST
0	0	2	500¥

LICENSED TEAM JERSEY (SPECIALTY ARMOR)			
ARM	CAP	AVAIL	COST
8	8	4	750¥

- The uses of these should be obvious. After the Ripper Riots, armored jerseys became more than a fun, if expensive, detail for die-hard fans. They actually made it harder to die if your team won. Or lost.
- Kat o' NineTales

- I hear the official team jerseys are made of much better materials than the commercially available ones.
- /dev/grrl

- Gotta protect that investment.
- Kat o' NineTales

ARES BRIEFCASE SHIELD

This briefcase flips open and locks. Internal straps and an armored composite construction allow it to be used as a ballistic shield. It has a Concealability of -4 for purposes or determining that it is more than a standard briefcase.

BRIEFCASE SHIELD (ARMOR)		
ARM	AVAIL	COST
+4	14H	1,800¥

BRIEFCASE SHIELD (EXOTIC MELEE WEAPON)			
ACC	REACH	DAM	AP
3	—	(STR+2)P	—

- Ahh, now this is far more useful. Mobile cover cannot be overestimated, and a shield can take many attackers by surprise, both defensively and offensively.
- Thorn

- The last time I saw one of these in action, the guy using it caught a grenade in it and snapped it shut. The explosion ballooned the briefcase, but it didn't break. Hell of a sales point.
- Red

- While it is unwieldy as a melee weapon, the solid construction means it can break bones with a solid hit.
- Thorn

- And in case no one is thinking of the obvious? That construction means whatever is inside is about as safe as it could be. You're basically carrying around a mobile vault.
- /dev/grrl

CATSUIT

This full-body, skin-tight armor leaves little to the imagination. It also provides excellent mobility and has plenty of capacity for modifications.

CATSUIT (SPECIALTY ARMOR)			
ARM	CAP	AVAIL	COST
3	10	6	900¥

- Hey, Kat—
- Red

- Stop now.
- Kat o' NineTales

- Old ways are often the best ways. A catsuit on its own is useful for presenting minimum visual profile, not to mention being all but necessary when navigating sensor nets and laser tripwire grids.
- Thorn

- And being just about the most obvious outfit you could possibly wear to announce that you are an intruder. No one wears these casually.
- /dev/grrl

- Well ...
- Kat o' NineTales

- Ha!
- Red

- Outfitted with the right sensor baffles or even hard-to-get ruthenium polymers, a catsuit can make for the best possible camouflage option in urban environments. But yes, as dev says, once you are spotted, you won't be able to talk your way out of it.
- Thorn

- I've always thought it was impressive when runners navigate those laser webs.
- Red

- Most of us can't turn to mist.
- /dev/grrl

SCOUT'S TUX

A classically cut and eternally fashionable tuxedo with a twist. Smart fabrics in this garment render it odor-, water-, and dirt-repellant, as well as making it always appear crisply pressed no matter what punishment it takes. Also available as a simple but elegant black evening gown. Features: Increase Social limit by 1.

SCOUT'S TUX (SPECIALTY ARMOR)			
ARM	CAP	AVAIL	COST
6	6	10	2,000¥

- It may be difficult to believe, but this may be my favorite thing on this list.
- Thorn

- Seriously?
- Red

- Absolutely. For those of us without magic, the ability to rapidly change a disguise is priceless. A trained guard doesn't just take in the fashion of clothes, but their state.

If you have just come in from a water approach in a wet suit, and you approach your target zone trying to look like a party guest, the guard will notice that your tuxedo looks like it was bunched at the bottom of a hamper for months, to say nothing of the state of your hair and skin. Modern cosmetics can take care of the latter, but this means you could wear that tux under the wetsuit and emerge looking fresh and ready for engagement.

- Thorn

- Just like the movies!
- Red

- Yes. Just like the movies.
- Thorn

ARMOR MODIFICATION

VOIDBLACK COATING

This modification layers the outer layer of the armor with a specialized configuration of carbon nanotubes. It is designed to absorb the maximum amount of light possible, making it the darkest black there is. When installed on armor that covers your whole body, it alters the base modifier for visual Perception tests to detect the wearer by -4 in dark or heavily shadowed areas. Due to the light-absorptive capacity of this coating, it has some unusual properties involving lasers. Laser weapon attacks against this armor have their Armor Penetration reduced by 3 (to a minimum of 0), and their Damage Value increased by 1. This modification is incompatible with any other modification that affects the external layer of the clothing including ruthenium polymer coating, electrochromic coating, or pulse weave.

VOIDBLACK COATING (ARMOR MODIFICATION)

CAP	AVAIL	COST
[6]	14F	3,000¥

- Brings whole new meaning to black-on-black.
- Red

- Only the richest of neo-goths can afford this for casual use. Anyway, it's surprisingly limited in a fashion sense, since the pure blackness makes it featureless. You can't see the textures of definition. There's some appeal in some ways, but it's more a one-trick pony than a game-changer.
- Kat o' NineTales

- The hidden advantage is that a voidblack outfit with a matching poncho or the like can usually make any movement without the viewer being aware of it. It's all so damn dark that you could make hand signals, flip them the bird, or reach behind your back to a holster without nearby observers knowing any better.
- Thorn

- Much like the catsuit, this stuff makes you stick out. The metahuman mind finds the absence of contour upsetting on a subconscious level. It's disorienting. Not to a debilitating degree, but enough to make people and even some animals uncomfortable.
- /dev/grrl

AR FASHION

This enhancement enables your armor and clothing to display a wide variety of AR overlays. Due to the ubiquity of AR-enabled vision devices, most people will see the look you choose to display and not the clothes you are actually wearing. This can serve as useful social camouflage. Even when you aren't wearing the right outfit for a situation, you can look like you are. Creating your own AR clothing can be done with an Artisan + Intuition Extended Test (30 minutes) with a threshold set by the gamemaster based on the complexity and specificity of the overlay you are attempting to create (per Extended Test Threshold Table, p. 48, *SR5*).

AR ENHANCED (ARMOR MODIFICATION)

CAP	AVAIL	COST
—	—	50¥

AR FASHION SUBSCRIPTION

TYPE	AVAIL	COST
Casual	—	25¥/month
Business	2	100¥/month
Formal	6	500¥/month
Designer	10	1,500¥/month

- This might be the most amazing cultural development I've seen since the '60s. Computer overlay fashion. Just ... wow.
- Red

- Yeah, but you pay for it. There was some talk about fashion being less wasteful and more affordable when this first came out. "Make your fashion your own." User-generated content was going to make everyone a fashion mogul. Not so much, as it ended up. Digital fashion design ended up being a subscription-based thing to stay on the cutting edge of the latest trends. (And don't

think you can rent it for just a single night. They look at your subscription length to know how serious you are. One-shots might as well wear a holographic trash bag.) It resulted in a corporate hiring binge to sweep up any talented amateurs, but they basically just spend twenty hours a day coding new trends on the fly. The customers are voracious for the new, but their level of conformity is astonishing.

- Kat o' NineTales

- Those designers make crap pay, but it's still enough to arrange their own extractions. You don't want to know how many of them have been snatched from Horizon, Evo and Renraku lately.
- /dev/grrl

- The creative runner can use modified AR fashion to provide quick disguises and concealment in overlay-rich environments. If everyone at the club is tuned into AR, then they won't see your gun because you have made it look like a purse. If you walk around the corner in a tuxedo and come back out in a janitor uniform, you might give 'em slip. People have an odd tendency to look at fashion before actual physical features, buying you valuable seconds before being identified.
- Thorn

- Oh, Thorn. Don't you know you can make AR overlays of your face, too? You could be an elf wearing that tux one second, and a human wearing a red cocktail dress the next. No one knows until they try to touch you.
- /dev/grrl

- Or, y'know, if anyone stops using AR for a moment.
- Red

- Riiiiiight.
- /dev/grrl

DISTRIBUTED DECK

A problem the decker on the go sometimes runs into is many security checkpoints will scan for decks as thoroughly as guns. A distributed deck solves this by breaking down the individual components into discrete (and discreet) units and embedding them in clothing. Your average pat-down or MAD-scanner sweep won't pick them up or will ignore them as the average tech that people build into their clothes (-6 comparability modifier). Building a deck into armor this way means that if you get injured, there is a chance the deck could be too. If an attack striking you penetrates your armor, making you roll to resist Physical damage, roll your Edge attribute. If you generate even one hit, you get lucky and the attack does not damage the deck. However, if you fail the deck is damaged and ceases to function until it is repaired. If you take Physical damage in a similar way on subsequent turns, repeat this process (assuming you are still alive). Repairing the deck requires a number of Electronics Component Packs (DT 65) equal in value to ten percent of the original base cost of the deck and a Hardware + Logic (12, 1 hour) Extended Test. Additional failures of the Edge test increase the repair cost by the same amount.

DISTRIBUTED DECK (ARMOR MODIFICATION)		
CAP	AVAIL	COST
10	+2	+10% of cyberdeck cost

- I have mixed feelings about this. I get why it exists. I get why it's useful. It addresses problems I've had in the past. But it makes an already-fragile piece of incredibly expensive equipment even more fragile and even more expensive. I suppose the one upside is that if one component is destroyed, you don't have to worry about the rest of it, so fixing it after the fact *might* be easier. Still, it's a really tough call to make.
- /dev/grrl

- Couldn't you keep spare components, so you could just switch them out in the field if one burns out or gets damaged?
- Red

- So now you're carrying even more delicate, super-pricy gear into the field? You end up being more conspicuous than you started.
- /dev/grrl

- Can't you just armor the components?
- Kat o' NineTales

- That just makes them bulky chunks instead of one larger brick. Bulky enough to merit investigation. Honestly, I stick with one solid piece of hardware, slip it in a sensor-proof case with a little padding, and keep it at the small of my back. But whatever. Different strokes for different blokes.
- /dev/grrl

GEAR

AR NAILS

Synthetic fingernails that function the same as AR gloves.

AR NAILS (ELECTRONICS ACCESSORIES)	
AVAILABILITY	COST
2	200¥

- How is this anything new? Don't people use these already?
- Kat o' NineTales

- There have been disposables and unreliable versions for years. They finally made a nice, stable, reusable version.
- /dev/grrl

- I've been seeing these everywhere. Either they're little dots on top of nails, or longer nails that have them integrated into them.
- Red

BUG PROMOTIONAL PEN

Apparently bought by the truckload by sales people, pens featuring a company logo are still common in the corporate world after more than a century. Any business worth dealing with hands out pens that also operate as a digital stylus. With all the microtronics that make this possible, it can be quite easy to slip in a number of goodies. The pen can accept [2] capacity of sensors with a max rating of 2. In addition, a standard or stealth RFID tag can be included.

BUG PROMOTIONAL PEN (ELECTRONICS)		
CAP	AVAIL	COST
2	3	100¥

- These are exceptional for data gathering. You can pass them out or casually leave them anywhere in an office to find out who is who or even gather blackmail material.
- Thorn

- With a little modding, you can set them up to record voice prints, phish passwords at terminals, or even set them to automap an area. If the poor slobs have tones at alphanumeric keypads, you can get the codes from the sounds.
- /dev/grrl

CHEM DETECT NAIL POLISH

This nail polish is a cocktail of active reagents that respond to the most common illicitly traded drugs and toxins on the market. When they come into contact with a liquid, the color changes to a specific hue depending on the class of chemical detected. If multiple toxins or drugs are detected, multiple speckles of color appear, and if no toxins or drugs are detected, the color remains unchanged. Each container contains enough nail polish for ten applications. Tests are made with the Rating x 2 and have a threshold of 2.

CHEMSNIFFER RING

This ring contains a microsensor capable of identifying a wide range of chemical substances. Tests on liquids for toxins or drugs are made with a dice pool equal to the Rating x 2 and have a threshold of 2. The ring can also act as an olfactory sensor for inhaled vector drugs and toxins with an effective range of 1 meter. Olfactory tests are made with a dice pool equal to the Rating and have a threshold of 2.

CHEM DETECT NAIL POLISH (SENSORS)		
RATING	AVAIL	COST
(1-4)	Rating	50¥ x Rating

CHEMSNIFFER RING (SENSORS)		
RATING	AVAIL	COST
(1-6)	3x Rating	250¥ x Rating

- A mainstay in the club scene since the '20s, I'm told, though it's been making a comeback since they were able to encode more chemical recognition reactions into the nail polish. For a while, there were so many new designer drugs and Awakened alchemies that there was just no way to detect them all without getting false positives. Even your clean glass of rum would register as drugged.
- /dev/grrl

- The rings are more reliable. Sure, you've got the reagent versions, and they're cheap, but the chemsniffer ring can tell your PAN exactly what's in the drink. And in the guy's cologne, too.
- Kat o' NineTales

- You can also use these proactively, to make sure you have the chemical you mean to buy and not some placebo, or to investigate the traces on a corpse to find the type of poison, beyond the immediate forensic signs.
- Thorn

CONCEALABLE SURVEILLANCE GEAR

Concealed as mundane items like buttons, earrings, necklaces, pins, and other baubles and bobs, these devices function as Sensor Tags (p. 440, *SR5*). These items have a Concealability modifier of -6 in respect to determining their true nature.

CONCEALABLE SURVEILLANCE GEAR (ELECTRONICS)	
AVAIL	COST
6	50¥

- You could get sensors this small since the early '70s—earlier, I understand, if you knew the right people.
- /dev/grrl

- True, but they were easy to detect both physically and electronically. Recent innovations have allowed concealed sensor systems to be integrated into buttons and jewelry, even the lining of some clothes, in a largely undetectable way against competing scanners. Of course, the arms race continues. Staying SOTA requires updating this kind of gear quite often, which is why this kind of gear is usually only bleeding-edge for government and megacorporate agencies.
- Thorn

FASHION GASMASKS/ RESPIRATORS

Functions as a gas mask or respirator (p. 449, *SR5*) without clashing with the look of your fancy outfit or drawing unwanted attention from law enforcement (negates the -2 Etiquette modifier for wearing the wrong attire as described on the Social Modifiers Table on p. 140, *SR5*).

FASHION GAS MASK (SURVIVAL GEAR)	
AVAIL	COST
3	300¥

FASHION RESPIRATOR (R 1-6) (SURVIVAL GEAR)	
AVAIL	COST
3	Rating x 75¥

- You see more and more of these in Tenochtitlan as the pollution gets worse, usually matching one of two trends. The first is based on the usual Aztechnology exploitation of cultural identity, appearing like shamanic masks of various Aztec gods and animal spirits. The second is actually a bit of an anomaly I can't explain: Tellurian's Ethereal Line out of Tír Tairngire.
- Kat o' NineTales

- Not much mystery to it. Tellurian came up with a gorgeous line of masks meant to appeal to their elven customer base, but they take such insanely good care of their land that there just isn't much of a market for them. So they exported, and now anyone with cash can buy a mask made of morphplast that looks like a fair elven face.
- Thorn

- The morphplast is uncanny valley-level creepy. It doesn't communicate all the expressions of the wearer; it just moves a little with their face, so it's like you're talking to a slightly living mask of a human. Blech. No thanks.
- /dev/grrl

- On the other hand, they're a hit in the kink scene.
- Kat o' NineTales

GHOST BOX

This device generates very specific frequencies of infrasound that vibrate the fluid in the eye and disrupt the inner ear, causing those affected to feel uneasy and see indistinct gray shapes that can easily be mistaken for spirits or ghosts. Each device is the size of a deck of cards and affects an area ten meters in radius.

GHOST BOX (ELECTRONICS)	
AVAIL	COST
6R	600¥

- Holy crap that is so cool.
- Red

- That sonic blaster really did a number on you, huh?
- /dev/grrl

- A con man was caught recently planting these devices and then selling his services as an exorcist to the victims. Not a bad scam.
- Kat o' NineTales

- Until he was caught, anyway.
- Thorn

- It's important to note that these won't make any kind of pre-programed images. They haven't figured out how to tweak the signals in such a way, assuming that's possible at all.
- /dev/grrl

- It's still quite useful for buying a little time putting doubt or paranoia in the minds of pursuit. Of course, unless there is some kind of countermeasure, everyone in the radius is equally affected, but at least you know what you are dealing with.
- Thorn

HOLO BRACELET

This bracelet has an embedded trideo holographic projector that projects a hologram right above your palm like you were actually holding the object. A successful Perception (2) Test reeals that the projection isn't real. Attempting to touch the object makes it immediately apparent that it is a hologram.

HOLO BRACELET (ELECTRONICS)		
RATING	AVAIL	COST
3	2	250¥

- These were actually developed in the '60s, primarily as a way for salespeople to immediately display product

information. When AR came out, they became obsolete, but you still see them being used for their original purpose in some deadzones or poor regions, such as the corridor markets of Chicago. Some folks in the Ork Underground like to wear them as a kind of blue-collar badge of pride, even if they don't work the job anymore.
- Red

- Pretty handy if you want to display a visual everyone can see clearly without AR or a monitor. Not that it comes up often.
- /dev/grrl

- You see these being used in entertainment more than anything, now. Magic tricks at a kid's birthday party, showy bits on stage, stuff like that.
- Kat o' NineTales

- Most stage magic is leftover or obsolete spy gear. Holo bracelets are masterful for the would-be pickpocket, especially if you use it to appear to have stolen something. While security searches you for the item (which has just "vanished"), your confederate is making off with the real goods. As an alternative, enough people have forgotten about these that, with a little dramatic embellishment, you can fool the uninitiated into thinking you are a spellcaster. There is no AR shadow to be traced. So long as it does not have a measurable elemental effect, such as a holographic flame being disproven by thermographic vision, you can claim all kinds of abilities.
- Thorn

LONG RANGE ACOUSTIC DEVICE (LRAD)

This device is to sound what a laser is to light. It projects audible sounds in a tightly focused beam over a distance of up to one hundred meters, which can only be heard by the individual targeted. This means of communication can only be intercepted by physically interrupting the beam.

LRAD (ELECTRONICS ACCESSORIES)		
CAP	AVAIL	COST
(3)	7	400¥

- Exceptionally useful for LOS communication when comms are tapped and signals are monitored. A smart team can use them in place of subvocal mics. I remember a team of ex-Tír spec-ops gone shadowrunners called Clover who used silent aerial drones to pass messages this way.
- Thorn

- Literally anything will absorb the sonic signal, so you can't beam it through a window like a laser. The cool part is that you don't need a receiver—it vibrates the message right into your skull. It's a little creepy, and it can make your fillings ache, but it works.
- /dev/grrl

- Creatures with enhanced hearing might detect a high-pitched whine, like an old television set in another room or a tinnitus sound, but you can't make out the message at all. Honestly, it's pretty hard to hear it at all unless you're listening for it and there's no other ambient sound. The middle of a field, for example, or in a large, empty room with no machinery. Not much of a risk at all.
- Red

MANA COMPASS

Superficially resembling a standard compass, on closer inspection the needle is glass rather than metal. Embedded within one end of the needle is an extremely tiny droplet of orichalcum. This compass, simply called a mana compass, always points toward the largest nearby active magical source. They are rare and sought after by mundane researchers of magical theory and phenomena. The compass points to a mana source if it is within a number of meters equal to the Force of a spell, manifested spirit, focus, or other similar effect. Magicians with the Masking metamagic concealing their owner are not detected. It does not point to mana sources on the astral plane. Extremely strong magical effects such as an alchera or mana storm cause the needle of the compass to spin wildly.

MANA COMPASS (MAGICAL SUPPLIES)	
AVAIL	COST
22R	32,000¥

- What do these have to do with social engineering?
- /dev/grrl

- A lot of this has to do with running scams just as much as anything, and a mana compass is an amazing way to sell a mine full of orichalcum. All you have to do is find someone with money, use the compass to show the magical importance of the location, and show them a deed for sale. Old scam, new spin.
- Red

- It is also exceptionally useful for un-Awakened who need to know where magical effects are coming from without astral sight. Spirits, spell effects, wards—any of them can make the needle move. Considering the proliferation of magic, and the fact that it represents a literal blind spot for most metahumans, I consider it well worth the

investment, particularly for the unfortunate runner team who doesn't have a mage.

- Thorn

TAILORED PERFUME/COLOGNE

Although the genetic codes for pheromone reception are largely inactive in metahumans, certain artificially crafted pheromones have been found that have proven effect. Tanake and several other corps have incorporated these compounds into perfumes and colognes. They last for four hours or until washed off.

TAILORED PERFUME/COLOGNE EFFECTS

TYPE	EFFECT
Aztec Fly	+1 to Con (Seduction) tests vs metahumans.
Black Panther	+1 to Social tests vs metahumans.
Lion's Roar	+1 to Intimidate tests vs metaumans.
Tanake Tiger	As Critter Spook quality (p. 120, *Run Faster*).
Tracking Hound	+2 to Tracking using Olfactory Sensors or the Scent critter power.
Winter Wolf	+2 to Intimidate tests vs animals.

TAILORED PERFUME/COLOGNE STATS

TYPE	AVAIL	COST
Aztec Fly	6	100¥
Black Panther	8R	250¥
Lion's Roar	4	75¥
Tanake Tiger	5	100¥
Tracking Hound	7	75¥
Winter Wolf	3	50¥

GENEMARKED PHEROMONES

Developed by underground chemists, this tailored perfume/cologne requires a genetic sample from an individual and is specifically formulated to maximize the effect with that genetic template. It grants a +2 bonus to Social tests against the specific individual from whom the sample was obtained.

GENEMARKED PHEROMONES (CHEMICALS)

AVAIL	COST
6R	300¥

- It's kind of funny, but this doesn't get used very much anymore.
- Kat o' NineTales

- Is it the success rate? I read a study that said Panther only works reliably on sixty percent of all metahumans.
- Red

- People were skeptical at first about another supposed "pheromone" cologne that could make you more attractive. It was the snake oil of the late 20th century. But some poor slot would still try anything new. It started off as an advantage in the barroom scene. After people started noticing it worked, it became a kind of arms race. One corp wanted more powerful or more broad-spectrum effects, another wanted one that had different effects. Some malfunctioned, others turned dance floors into orgies. By the time it stabilized, no one was bothering with them, because a basic olfactory scanner can pick it up and you know someone is trying to manipulate you. And it's not like they get through toxin filters or masks.
- Kat o' NineTales

- So who buys them?
- Red

- Couples who want to light things up, club-goers who want to pump up the experience, or anyone who doesn't know it's coming.
- Kat o' NineTales

- Ah, but you are missing one small detail: customized pheromones, tailored to a specific person's bio-chemistry, don't show up on markers or get filtered out by cybernetic implants.
- Thorn

- How does that work?
- Kat o' NineTales

- I just asked Butch the same thing. She says it's because the body accepts the pheromones that are made for them, and because they only need to work on one target, they can strip out all of the elements that make them universally accepted. The streamlined cocktail lacks the chemical components that the sensors and filters detect. So, if someone is really out to grab *you* in particular, your best bet is to keep your wits about you. No magic or technology will pick them up.
- /dev/grrl

- Damn ... that's a whole new reason for grabbing material links out of a DocWagon vault that has nothing to do with magic.
- Red

SHAMAN TUXEDO

A shaman tuxedo, as it is called on the street, is a set of ritualistic garb which assists a summoner in dealing with a particular type of spirit. Unique to each tradition, an assortment of various bangles and baubles with symbolic meaning comprises the outfit. Each set

is designed to affect one specific type of spirit that tradition is capable of conjuring. Not technically a full suit of clothing in itself, this garb is usually worn over other clothing (although ritualists of the Great Mother are an exception). Corporate dress code regulations usually make exceptions for these accessories as their efficacy is considered worth the breach in usual protocol. A conjurer wearing a shaman tuxedo receives one free hit on Summoning tests solely for purposes of determining the number of favors owed with the particular type and tradition of spirit they were designed to please.

SHAMAN TUXEDO (MAGICAL SUPPLIES)	
AVAIL	COST
9	1,000¥

- I somehow feel like I should be offended by the name on behalf of shamans.
- Red

- One thing's for sure, they aren't fashionable to anyone *but* spirits.
- Kat o' NineTales

- Buyer beware; these get counterfeited a lot. Would-be summoners and other mundanes with dreams of touching the supernatural are more than willing to shell out the cred for something they think will make them more attractive to spirits. As some small consolation, spirits don't even notice the fake stuff, and it usually sells for half the price of the real thing. Savings like that are usually enough to press the desperate to make the plunge without thinking too hard about it.
- Red

SOCIAL SOFTWARE SUBSCRIPTION

These are illegal subscription services operated by several underworld data networks. They require a wireless connection to use.

CarnivoreGold: This service is a mashup of a linguistic database and code-breaking software. It allows users to translate unknown languages that they may have no other way of understanding, including coded communication developed exclusively for small groups of people. This service allows the user to make a Computer + [Device Rating of device running the service] Test in place of a Language + Intuition Test to understand what was said.

MonaLisa: This facial recognition database grants +2 dice pool modifier on Computer (Matrix Search) + Logic Tests to identify an unknown individual's image through various Matrix databases. Used in conjunction with a visual recording device.

Pheromone Detection: Used in conjunction with an olfactory sensor or cyberware, this software is able to detect and identify various types of synthetic pheromones such as the ones produced by the tailored pheromones bioware, tailored perfume/cologne, and other, similar sources.

Speech Template Comparison: This software can analyze existing recordings of an individual and pick out speech patterns, word use, and other vocal identifiers. This speech template can then be used to compare to new recordings to help determine if a recording is a fake or the real thing. Gain a +2 dice pool modifier on tests to resist an Impersonation attempt. Used in conjunction with an audio recording device.

Target Tracking Software: This software assists in surveilling an individual or individuals (up to a maximum number of individuals equal to the Device Rating of the device using the service) even in a crowd. It provides a +2 on Perception tests regarding the target/targets. Used in conjunction with a visual sensor. If combined with speech template comparison software and an audio recording device, it allows tracking targets that are out of line of sight but still speaking within range of the audio sensor.

Thermal Mood Reading: This software uses microfluctuations in the target's skin surface temperature to judge emotional state. Gain a +2 on Judge Intentions tests to determine a target's emotional state. Used in conjunction with a visual sensor with thermographic capability. If vocal tension lie detection software is run in conjunction with this software, the combination grants a +3 dice pool bonus on all Judge Intentions Tests.

Vocal Tension Lie Detection: Gain a +2 dice pool bonus on Judge Intention tests to determine if someone is lying. Used in conjunction with an audio recording device. If thermal mood reading software is run together with this software, the combination grants a +3 dice pool bonus on all Judge Intentions Tests.

SOCIAL SOFTWARE SUBSCRIPTIONS		
SUBSCRIPTION	AVAIL	COST
CarnivoreGold	10F	250¥ per month
MonaLisa	12F	250¥ per month
Pheromone Detection	8F	250¥ per month
Speech Template Comparison	10F	250¥ per month
Target Tracking Software	5F	250¥ per month
Thermal Mood Reading	6F	250¥ per month
Vocal Tension Lie Detection	6F	250¥ per month

- This warrants a whole write-up.
- /dev/grrl

Social Software Subscriptions are a new service to come from fake ID syndicates. It takes a lot of moving

pieces in a lot of places to make even a simple SIN, let alone a high-quality one. Syndicates devoted to these networks include people in government and corporate positions, as well as private investigators, data phishers, social network analysts, and more. They go through the huge tangle of data to find cracks that can be filled in with fake people, substituting death certificates, stillborns, and the still-massive knots of post-crash data gaps and the bureaucracy that comes with restoring missing personal data. Now, making IDs is lucrative, but they still have access to all that data. Someone got the bright idea to turn this into an investigator's wet dream, with the network doing searches on people – real people, not spaces for fake SINs – to assemble profiles on individuals for a premium.

Now, this means a great dossier can be assembled, including everything from social trends to psychophysical tells, more than enough to give an edge. But the syndicates decided to go one better than that: they got their hooks into psychologists and data analysts (and a hell of a lot of agents, from what I hear), and built an AR program that offers analysis of the individual, depending on whether you want to buy access to the person. That means you are paying to know their likes and dislikes (marketing analytics), public trends (social media breakdown), income and assets (tax data, employment history). But let's get creepier. If you pay for it, and you have the right sensors hooked up, you can get real-time analysis of their physical tells (harvested from the countless places people get recorded), their voice analysis (emotional state and whether they are telling the truth), thermal reads (blush response indicates a few things, including stress or lies), or even pheromone tells (yes, an olfactory sensor hooked into this can smell their sweat and tell if they are angry or horny, if you're too dense to figure it out for yourself).

They have a basic service, of course, which doesn't require individual dossiers and their attendant purchases and just links all your sensors to a general database they have assembled based on standard metahuman microexpressions, biorhythmic patterns, etc. It works fairly well to give you a bunch of insight when you're reading someone, with percentage-based likelihood of different emotions. A small upgrade can let you choose options to give broad tips on how to get them to do what you want based on their mood and your intentions.

Now, I think all of this falls between cheating and being a super stalker tool, because anyone who needs this shouldn't be doing the job at all. Learning how to read people, negotiate with them—those are trained skills, and this is too much like skillwires for me. They won't beat the real thing. But I do think they are handy in one small respect: All that data focuses on unconscious reactions. Most folks don't control their blush, their pulse, or their microexpressions. You need frame-by-frame instant replay to see them in real-time. But this software can, possibly, tell you when someone is going to do something when even they don't know they're going to do it. So a cop trying to talk some slag off the ledge might get a ping that the poor slag is about to dive, or you might see that your mark is about to panic and pull their gun. That's useful. But again, if you have the skills, you don't need this, and there's not much point in hiring someone who relies on a machine to do their thinking for them when there's perfectly good professionals available who won't go to pieces once they're off the grid.

- What are microexpressions?
- Kat o' Nine Tales

- It's this trick that fake mind readers used to use way back when. They are these very quick, involuntary tics in the face, less than a tenth of a second, that literally all metahumans make in response to certain emotions. No matter where you are from, your exposure to others, or even if you are blind, you make these faces, if only for a fraction of an instant. There are a lot of advanced combinations, but they can reliably narrow down the subject's emotion to one of seven basic patterns: fear, surprise, anger, disgust, happiness, sadness, and hate.
- Red

- It says a lot about metahumans that only one out of those seven is a positive one.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

- Metahumanity has an infinite capacity for the creation, expression, and exploitation of suffering.
- Thorn

- Damn. That's dark. I buy it, but that's really depressing.
- /dev/grrl

- And in 1/25th of a second, I can see it on your face as plain as day.
- Thorn

- What about the more complex emotions?
- Kat o' Nine Tales

- Well, that falls into body language. The more complex the emotion, the more moving parts it has. Plus, microexpressions are entirely involuntary, and most people can't fake them. Expressions of, say, flirtation are more deliberate and almost always slower. More like mating dances. Biting your lip or touching a lot or playing with your hair, for example. A microexpression could give additional context, though. Like, you might be flirting with me, but if I can tell you are sad, you might be doing this because you are lonely, or you just got broken up with. If you are full of hate, this could be a trap for me, or revenge

on someone else. Trouble for me either way. Fear might mean you are being coerced. Every extra bit of info gives greater depth of context. And that's all before I know anything about you.

- Red

- What amazes me is that this kind of technology isn't available in an isolated fashion, away from the subscription service.
- Thorn

- Oh, it is. If you want to collate all that data yourself, then compile it into a profile for quick exploitation or real-time use, good for you. I'll see you next year. The basic package is available, agents and market analytics use it all the time, but it can't come close to the precision you get through the subscription and all the extra data and advice they pump through it.

  Of course, I suspect that the SIN syndicates have a hand in wiping out any competition. Someone wants to muscle in on their territory, they've already cast such a wide net that they can scramble data and alter information to ruin your program. And then they can strike back the way they know best: hitting your identity. They don't have to hire a killer or send thugs. They can just erase you, or put out a warrant for your arrest, or any of a million other tortures that come by way of a SIN. Not worth it.
- /dev/grrl

- There has to be a better name for those organizations.
- Kat o' NineTales

- SINdicates?
- Thorn

- That's horrible.
- Red

- It is. I love it.
- Kat o' NineTales

SUBLIMINAL SUBACOUSTICS SOFTWARE

The concept of subliminal advertising is over a century old. While most of the old stuff has been disproved as pseudoscience, subliminal subacoustics have proven to be effective. Certain acoustic frequencies can have dramatic effects on the mood and cognition of metahumans on a subliminal level. These acoustic frequencies can be tuned to a certain mood, such as love, hate, rage, or despair. Any standard speaker can broadcast these frequencies. Those affected by subliminal subacoustics take a -2 dice pool penalty to actions opposed to the emotion. For example, a subject engaged in combat while feeling rage suffers no penalty, while a subject attempting negotiation would suffer the penalty. Subjects in an area where a subliminal subacoustic frequency is being broadcast must make a Logic + Willpower (2) Test or be affected.

SUBLIMINAL SUBACOUSTICS (SOFTWARE)	
AVAIL	COST
14F	1,250¥

- I remember in the early '60s I was hired to snatch a guy who worked on sonic technology. Blasted me with a noise pistol prototype that gave me a splitting headache for hours. Made casting anything really difficult. Ever since then I've found sonic tech fascinating.
- Red

- How do you know he didn't blast you with something laced with subliminals?
- /dev/grrl

- I imagine he got all the funding he needed when potential investors and supervisors "heard" a demonstration and couldn't stop thinking about it.
- Thorn

- ... holy shit.
- Red

- These are super illegal. There are actually laws about how much subliminal conditioning can be placed in any ad or form of media. Can't go stacking the deck by brainwashing your entire client base, now can you?
- Kat o' NineTales

- In fact, it goes much deeper. Studies showed that excessive competing subliminal input caused increasing degrees of mental instability in the consumer, resulting in borderline personality disorder, fragmentary personality disorder, dissociative disorder, and sometimes outright schizophrenia.
- Thorn

- Most insanity by way of trauma is a self-preservation mechanism. I'm guessing the only way the mind could adapt to the conflicting orders was to create alternate personalities for each loyalty. That's terrifying.
- Red

- Ah, but want to hear something really interesting? Anything illegal finds a market, yes, but these have found a use as a narcotic. Some people like falling deeper and deeper into thrall while in noizeholes, sort of a sonic equivalent to a BTL.
- Kat o' NineTales

- Given that these are effectively aural psychotropics, that's not surprising.
- Thorn

DRONES

HOLO-CONFERENCE DRONE

When inactive, this small drone looks like the classic flying saucer of the previous century. Contained within are a high-quality audio/visual sensor suite, speakers, and a high-density holoprojector (HDH). When active, however, the net effect is a walking, talking holographic facsimile of an individual. They are typically used for business meetings where high-powered individuals want to make their presence felt in a way that the standard conference call doesn't allow. The HDH is the most advanced holoprojection unit on the market. The technology is the first major development in this field for over a decade, as it has become less popular due to the ubiquity of augmented reality. Rumor has it that the technology was developed by an AI who wanted a way to interact with metahumanity on their level but thought an anthroform drone was "creepy." The holoprojector functions like a standard unit, though it is a Perception (2) test to detect that the projected hologram is not real. Sold with the drone is a holorecorder required for a person to project their likeness.

HOLO-CONFERENCE DRONE (SMALL DRONE)								
HAND	SPEED	ACCEL	BOD	ARM	PIL	SENS	AVAIL	COST
3	2	1	2	3	3	3	11	18,000¥

- I find this much more useful than the bracelet version. Attach a few to walls along an escape route, deploy them via hovering micro drones, or use a small crawler or roller drone. You can buy yourself valuable seconds by making the enemy hesitate, chase, or fire upon the decoy instead of you.
- Thorn

- One time I was working with a decker who convinced a double-crossing Johnson that he and his men were surrounded. A bunch of holo-goons come around the corner, all pipes and guns and biker leather. The best one, though, was the sniper. She has this hologram of a marksman on a nearby roof, and when she indicates him to Johnson, the drone turns on a laser sight, landing right on Mr. Johnson's triple-breasted pinstripe heart. It was awesome.
- Red

- Also makes for a fun way to designate a target. Paint a big holographic bullseye and watch as a bunch of snipers with no radio contact start knocking their marks down.
- /dev/grrl

- I've done the same with phantasm spells.
- Red

MEDUSA EXTENSIONS

These thin, thirty-centimeter-long tendrils are simple drones with trodes that can respond with pre-programmed actions in response to the wearer's neural stimuli. Over a dozen can be placed along the scalp and can move independently or in sync with each other. They can be programmed to move or change color in response to the wearer's mood. There are several different styles available, differing in appearance from dreadlocks to actual snakes. They can also be commanded to take the form of a bracelet or necklace.

MEDUSA EXTENSIONS (MINI DRONE)								
HAND	SPEED	ACCEL	BOD	ARM	PIL	SENS	AVAIL	COST
1	0	0	1	0	1	1	7	600¥

- Erebus from Erebus and Cerberus uses this in his stage shows. He's got little holoprojectors in them to make all kinds of light shows for the crowd.
- Kat o' NineTales

- These were just coming into vogue before I went under for a while. I had a few installed on a bracer that could dart out of my sleeve and tase someone. You could put an injector in one, or a mini-tool. I know it's a fashion thing, but these are just so damn useful. I love them.
- Red

- I once used something similar for an extraction. While shaking someone's hand, the drone could dart out and "bite" them with narcoject. I imagine they could be quite useful in any grappling combat.
- Thorn

- Man, but some welding lasers on the tips? That would stop handsy guys on the dance floor ...
- /dev/grrl

- Hands off, literally.
- Red

MICROWEAVE SPIDER DRONE

This palm-sized drone looks a bit like a metal spider. It comes standard with a Rating 4 Armorer autosoft, micromanipulators, and a custom internal tool kit that allows it to repair damaged clothing and armor.

MICROWEAVE SPIDER (MINI DRONE)								
HAND	SPEED	ACCEL	BOD	ARM	PIL	SENS	AVAIL	COST
4	1	1	1	0	4	2	11	18,000¥

- On a long-term deployment, these can be literal lifesavers.
- Thorn

- On a really good date, too.
- Kat o' NineTales

- You can also tell them to start weaving bindings on hostages if you're in a hurry, or have them reinforce or repair existing ones.
- Red

- Oooooohhh ...
- Kat o' NineTales

- I wonder if you could adapt them to be some kind of auto-suture drone ...
- /dev/grrl

INFORMATION FOR SALE

Knowledge is power, and that power comes at a price. Info brokers scour the Matrix for paydata and compile it in vast databases of private information available to the highest bidder. Some types of data may be readily available, while others may take time to dig up if they can be found at all. Below is a listing of all the various types of data one can buy on the black market. Note that the GM has final say as to the availability of specific data.

Access Codes: Hackers gather these as a matter of course. ShadowSEA and other criminal networks have marketplaces with vast offerings of admin-level passcodes, digital keys, and maps to back doors. These are often changed quickly, so the market is always on the move with constantly shifting product. It's just as possible to engage their own tactics yourself, from trojan phishing expeditions to miner worms and everything in between. Sometimes it's as simple as a pair of binoculars used from across the street while they punch in an alphanumeric to get to work.

Address: A cursory search can provide the most basic mailing lists and delivery metrics, but the right investigation can find the subtle networks that link a single individual to a series of safehouses, hangouts, and common associates.

Blackmail Info: Everyone has secrets. The bigger the secret, the harder they try to hide it. Blackmail info is intrinsically valuable, because those who gather it know that it is paydata. The only reason it can be bought for less than it is worth is because the buyer who intends to use it also incurs risk. For every mark who rolls over and pays, there's another who would sooner kill to see their secrets safe. Finding that paydata is hard work, and info miners are always looking to expand their inventory. This involves deeper data dives and footwork than any other kind of personal info, and more often than not means boots on the ground with camera in hand to get the unsavory details. High risk, high reward. You're basically hiring another runner if you want them to gather it for you, and odds are, you're going to do some of this work yourself.

Handwriting Analysis: Almost an anachronism, handwriting is most common among the highest and lowest echelons of society. For the rich, writing is classy in a classic way, with people in power ties literally signing off on projects. For the poor, it's just practical to put things down where they can't be hacked or they don't depend on the shoddy local power grid. Many of the middle class tend to do things entirely digitally, while others belong to the growing number of illiterate who have grown spoiled on text-to-speech translators and iconographic guides through their AR life. Analysis of a person's handwriting is essential in any forgery that might bear their mark, but for the people with the training, some interesting psychological insights can be gleaned from the way they write, especially their signature.

History: The bread and butter of any private eye or corporate headhunter, assembling the history of any individual comes down to following their digital footprint. Time-consuming, but not too hard to gain with the right skills. The level of detail is the real challenge. Finding out that someone lived in the UCAS and then moved to the California Free State is different from knowing the exact addresses and dates of moving, and both are different from determining their employment history, their romantic entanglements, or their family history. The more data, the more expensive it gets, as always.

Hobbies: Social networks are indispensible for the average SINner. From P2.0 to membership in online cliques to search history and buffered caches and cookies, people not only seek information about the things that interest them but also like minds to share them with. For a less technological approach, it can be as simple as asking about their known associates, taking a short stroll through their doss or workspace, or tailing them through a shopping mall.

Market Scan: Compiles a list of all vendors of an item, reducing the availability index for that purchase.

Medical Conditions: Knowing someone's physical strengths and weaknesses can offer juicy blackmail data, or warn you that the mark you intend to bring in alive will have a heart attack if you use a taser, or an allergic reaction to certain foods or medications. While this info is often well-protected in medical databases such as DocWagon or CrashCart, getting it can also be as simple as a nice bribe to their physician or a quick file pull by a friendly EMT with the right authorizations. After all, what good is a DocWagon contract if the medics don't know everything about you?

Name: Pretty simple to find—using modern social network searches, access to facial recognition software and the attached databases can speed up the results, as well as cross-referencing for other SINs and aliases.

Pattern Recognition: A broad school, pattern recognition focuses on the habits of an individual. Many metahumans are creatures of habit, meaning they can usually be counted on to act in certain ways given either a schedule or a stimulus. Some people will always stop to window shop, or never miss Sunday Mass, or always dodge to the left. Cause and effect examination is most important, but it often depends on long-term, passive observation to build an understanding deep enough to predict the mark's move before they make it.

Psych Profile: A detailed psychological profile of the mark demands intensive analysis of behavior patterns, especially cause and effect. The easiest way is to find existing profiles, which most corporations assemble out of habit to better manage their citizenry. For the manager class and above, seeing a shrink in the '70s is so common as to be taken for granted, and hacking the psychologist's records can put all of their analysis in your hands. Other times it is necessary to develop your own analysis. The simplest ideas can be formed from an overall picture of the mark's lifestyle, from purchasing history to their dating profile. More can be gleaned from interviews with employers, associates, and family. The best will involve examples of them in action. The way they talk to others, deal in business, or approach various situations can all help to form a more complete picture of their mind and methods. Of course, all of this requires someone who knows how to read those trends and quirks. Psychoanalysts do a thriving business in the Sixth World, as everyone wants to get the inside line on their potential hires, coworkers, and clients. They charge a lot, but their insights can be invaluable. Odds are, your higher-end fixer has already had one made on you.

Recent Purchases: Credit history is a beautiful thing in the age of electronic transactions. Almost no one pays with hard currency unless they are trying to keep their purchases off the grid, and those tend to be of an illegal nature. For those, it all comes down to word of mouth, but the rest can be gleaned from the Matrix by a decent hacker, which keeps costs on the lower side.

Social Media Analysis: A focused examination of the mark's online social presence is different from a quick scan of their P2.0 page. Going back far enough and searching through their blogs, screeds, posts, chats, and comments paints a better picture of the evolution of their politics and personal tastes as well as insights into how they communicate. From trolls to peacemakers, political firebrands to entertainment news junkies, it is possible to find the right ice breakers to make getting close to them much easier.

Safehouses: Buying trends, public service usage, Matrix bandwidth expenditure, and more can offer a percentage analytic, indicating likelihood of habitation

of a potential safehouse. For greater accuracy, the runner in a rush can tap into real-time searching and possibly find spots they might be able to use—or ones that might already be in use.

Workplace: For the SINner, place of employment is almost laughably easy to determine, as any corporate SIN holds the immediate imprint at first glance. In the case of some corps, the logo is oftentimes much more visible than the citizen's face or personal info. Locating the specific assignment is just a matter of accessing the databases of that corporation. For independently employed marks, or the SINless, it falls to footwork, word of mouth, and a much more diverse (and therefore expensive) array of databases. Street cams, police and medical records, money spread around at the bars, and shops in their area of operation can all offer clues.

DATA

TYPE	COST
Access Codes	500–2,500¥
Address	200-750¥
Blackmail Info	2,000+¥
Handwriting Analysis	150–400¥
History	250–2,000¥
Hobbies	100–500¥
Market Scan	100–300¥
Medical Condition	500–3,000¥
Name	100–500¥
Pattern Recognition	300–1,750¥
Psych Profile	750–3,000¥
Recent Purchases	150–1,500¥
Safehouses	1,000+¥
Social Media Analysis	100–500¥
Workplace	150–600¥

QUALITIES

POSITIVE

ALIBI

Cost: 4 Karma

Lie often enough, and your mind starts coming up with excuses in advance. You've been doing this for so long that it often happens subconsciously. You've got two or three plausible reasons to be anywhere in the world, at this point, and you're always forming more as you go. Whether it's something as simple as "Sorry, I thought this was the bathroom," to convincing the cops that the explosives you're carrying are armed and you're an unwilling hostage, you're always prepared. You always receive the +2 modifier on Con tests when you have plausible-seeming evidence (per the Social Modifiers Table, p. 140, *SR5*).

CLOSER

Cost: 4 Karma

When the pressure is on, you put on the pressure. In high-stakes, high-rewards situations, the adrenaline kicks your mind into gear and the words just come to you. You know how to press the edge when tensions are maxed, so make 'em sweat. Nothing beats the rush of winning.

You have a +2 dice pool modifier to Negotiation tests when it is a matter of life or death (gamemaster discretion).

CYNIC

Cost: 6 Karma

How many times does Mr. Johnson have to screw you over before you just assume he's lying to you? What about anyone else? You've been stabbed in the back so many times you've got little mirrors in your sunglasses to see them coming. You might be a downer, but no one gets the drop on you. How could they? You were expecting their sudden, inevitable betrayal all along. Anyone attempting a Social test against you has a –1 dice pool modifier.

EMPATHIC LISTENER

Cost: 10 Karma

Charming people always seem to know what to say. You might not be well-spoken, but you weren't born yesterday, either. A gut feeling, some honest empathy—you've got a little insight to make up for lack of social graces. It might not be pretty, but you can win people over by playing to exactly what they want to hear. Substitute Intuition for Charisma on Etiquette tests.

GOOD LOOKING AND KNOWS IT

Cost: 10 Karma

If you've got it, flaunt it! Good genes, good fashion sense, or a good plastic surgeon have blessed you with looks that turn heads. The good news? You can often get what you want just by virtue of that pretty face. The bad news? They won't forget that face any time soon.

Players with this quality receive +1 Notoriety, and Memory tests to remember them gain a +2 dice modifier. On the bright side, you can ignore 2 points of negative modifiers on any Social test.

GROUPTHINK

Cost: 5 Karma

Spend enough time around others and you'll start to finish one another's sentences. Yeah, it's cute, but with

practice, you can anticipate your partner's next move and compensate. These are pack tactics for social wolves.

When making a teamwork test using a social skill, each assistant with this quality receives a +1 dice pool modifier and +1 Social limit to the test to determine the bonus they give to the leader's roll. If the leader of the group has this quality, they can take a -2 to their roll to reduce an assistant's critical glitch to a glitch or negate a glitch (but not both).

HONEST FACE

Cost: 5 Karma

Who, me? Whether you sold bad cars to old ladies or spent a whole lot of time looking in the mirror getting ready for Friday night poker, you sure don't look like a liar, particularly when you are lying. This doesn't make you look innocent—just without guile. Good for selling lunar real estate. Better for convincing the interrogator you really don't know anything else.

Whenever someone makes a Judge Intentions test against you, you receive a +2 dice pool modifier to the opposing Charisma + Willpower test.

INNOCUOUS

Cost: 5 Karma

Sure, a guy can be bland and unmemorable, but it's something else altogether to disappear into a crowd. You know how to dress mundane, slouch your shoulders, pull your hat low, and turn the right corner. You can vanish into the masses, hiding in plain sight, or approach your prey with the herd. You gain a +2 to Sneaking tests to hide in a crowd.

MASTER DEBATER

Cost: 10 Karma

Some people try to win others over to their side. You win by crushing their logic with your own. Against you, they either admit you are right or look like an idiot. This won't win you any friends, but it will get the unassailable fact of your point across, and sometimes that's enough.

Use Logic in place of Charisma for Diplomacy tests.

MEMORY PALACE

Cost: 6 Karma

Photographic memory is one of those things some people are born with. For everyone else, there's building a memory palace. Months, often years of work go into building a psychoscape where you are at peace, and where any memory is there for your appraisal. While not as thorough as similar adept powers, the time you have spent building the place has given you somewhere to run in your own head when the outer world becomes too much to bear. You receive +1 dice pool modifier to Memory Tests and to resist Intimidation (Interrogation) tests.

METHOD ACTOR

Cost: 7 Karma

Strasberg, Adler, Meisner—you've studied them all, and you put the system to work for you. You can talk like you've walked a mile in those shoes, because you have. With sufficient time to research, observe, and suitably immerse yourself in the role, you effectively become the part. You can fool others, because you've already fooled yourself. For every full day that you immerse yourself in a role, you gain a +1 dice pool bonus and +1 Social limit to Impersonation tests for the role you have adopted. The maximum bonus you can gain is equal to your Willpower.

MNEMONIC VAULT

Prerequisite: Memory Palace
Cost: 8 Karma

Once the Memory Palace is built, it is possible to sort through memories for faster analysis and recall. But those who fear their minds being probed or the tender mercies of an interrogator can use the ability to lock memories away in a vault, hidden in their Palace. These memories are forgotten until the vault is visited again, meaning that a mind probe cannot find them, and truth serums and scanners don't register a lie when the character denies knowledge. Naturally, these memories are non-existent until the character returns to the vault to see what is locked up there. You receive +2 dice to resist Intimidation (Interrogation) tests and any magical or other effect that would compel you to give up information involuntarily. If you succeed in resisting such a test, the interrogator believes what you have told them is all you know.

WATCH THE SUIT

Cost: 3 Karma

You paid good nuyen for a Starlight gown. There's no way you're going to let this clown bleed all over it. You've got the presence of mind and the little dextrous tricks to get in a tousle and still come out looking good. This prevents any Stun damage from marring your appearance. Physical damage will still draw blood and leave cuts, burns, or worse that you can't avoid. You never receive negative dice pool modifiers to Etiquette tests for looking roughed up after a fight in which you did not take Physical damage, and your appearance won't rouse suspicion that you were recently involved in an altercation.

NEGATIVE

ALPHA JUNKIE

Cost: -12 Karma

Some people need to be in charge no matter what. That's you, big guy. Maybe you have trust issues. Maybe you have an inferiority complex. If you're in the spotlight and leading the show, all is well, but the moment someone

else is calling the shots, you fall to pieces, likely arguing the point or sabotaging the plan just to prove yours was better, anyway. When someone makes a successful Leadership test against you or you otherwise believe someone is trying to take charge over you, you must make a Charisma + Willpower (3) Test. If you fail, you attempt to reassert your control, whether by making your own Leadership test, an Intimidate test, or outright attacking.

DESIGNATED OMEGA

Cost: -5 Karma

It's safer when someone else is giving the orders, isn't it? That way, if it goes sideways, it's not your fault. Or maybe you just don't trust yourself to do the job right, or you freeze under pressure. As long as you're working support or moving with your designated herd, you're just fine. If you're put in a position where the team depends on you, or you need to make a critical decision, you freeze up. You take a -2 dice pool modifier to all Leadership tests, whether initiating or resisting.

DISHEVELED

Cost: -5 Karma

"You clean up real well!" You've never heard this in your life. Somehow, you have a talent for turning high fashion into a parody. Your posture is poor, nothing fits right, your hair is always a mess, and cologne just smells weird on you. The best you can hope for is for high fashion to come off as business casual. The rest of the time? You are a slob. You never receive positive Social dice pool or limit modifiers from the clothing you wear.

FAVORED

Cost: -3 to -10 Karma

Tribality is a curse in the metahuman mind. Maybe you belong to a specific, actual tribe. Maybe there's a group you look up to, like elves for their grace and longevity, or you think AIs are a misunderstood, oppressed, and perhaps superior new species. Funny how hard it is to see the bloodstains on their hands through those rose-colored glasses.

The Karma bonus granted by this quality depends on how common the favored group is, how often the character is likely to encounter members of the group, and the degree to which the character shows preference toward them. Refer to the Favored Table to determine the Karma value of the quality based on the prevalence of the favored group and the degree of favoritism. When dealing with the target of their favor, a character receives a -2 dice pool modifier per level of severity of the Favored quality for all Social Tests. If negotiations are a part of the encounter, the target receives a +2 modifier per level of the Favored quality. So if a character who is radical in their preference for the Awakened tries to negotiate with the target of their favor, they receive a -6 to their Negotiation Test while the target receives a +6 dice pool modifier.

FAVORED

PREVALENCE OF TARGET GROUP	KARMA VALUE
Common Target Group	5
Specific Target Group	3

FAVORED

DEGREE	KARMA VALUE
Biased	0
Outspoken	2
Fanatic	5

ONE BORN EVERY MINUTE

Cost: -5 Karma

But he had such an honest face! You're a sucker, plain and simple. Don't feel too bad, though, you're in good company. Lots of folks pay up front for representation in Hollywood, or invest in can't-lose schemes, or donate to beleaguered Nigerian princes. You are what keeps the grift industry alive, and that's something to be proud of.

You take a -2 to resist all Con tests made against you.

SOCIAL APPEARANCE ANXIETY (SAA)

Cost: -3 Karma per rating, max 3

Like the old flatvid once said, "I can afford a blemish on my character, but not on my clothes." In the age of style over substance, you need to look your best at all times if you're going to compete. Problem is, you've come to depend on it. When you aren't clean, coiffed, and cutting, you become very aware of your own flaws, resulting in a -1 die penalty to all Social rolls per level of this quality.

THE GOAT

Cost: -8 Karma

Some people say the butler did it. Anyone who knows you looks at you first. Hell, people who don't know you look at you first. You just look guilty. Probably your shifty eyes and the way you skulk around like you have something to hide. For normal people, this is an inconvenience. For a career criminal, it's a liability. When nothing is amiss, security still keeps an eye on you (which can be useful for your team if you serve as a distraction), but the moment something happens, they have guns trained and you're being cuffed. Anyone meeting you for the first time has a suspicious attitude toward you, granting you a -1 Social dice pool modifier (per the Social Modifiers Table, p. 140, *SR5*).

UGLY AND DOESN'T CARE

Cost: -10 Karma

Fell out the ugly tree, blah blah, you've heard it all before. And you know what? You don't care anymore! If people are going to judge you by your looks, then they

can kiss your ugly ass. You're not afraid to get a broken nose or a black eye. There's nowhere to go but up. Reduce your attribute maximum for Charisma by 1 and your starting Charisma by 1 (to a minimum of 1).

ADEPT POWERS

LIE DETECTOR

0.25 PP per level

You can always spot a liar. Gain +1 to Judge Intentions tests, assensing for emotional states, or tests to determine if someone is telling the truth. Adepts with this power are highly sought after by corporations for their ability to effectively counter other adepts using Kinesics.

OSMOSIS

0.25 PP per level. Prerequisite: Mimic

While the Mimic power allows an adept to replicate an individual's finger, palm, and retinal prints, the Osmosis power can go a level deeper. Osmosis allows an adept to temporarily replicate an individual's blood type and even genetic prints. This replication is sufficient to fool the comparatively cursory biometric typing used by security devices and medical quick tests, however it will not fool in-depth scrutiny by lab technicians. The adept must spend 1 minute in contact with the target, with each minute increasing the quality of the copy. The Mimic power can be activated during the same contact period. The highest copy that can be produced is Rating 6 (which requires 6 minutes of contact with the target and 6 levels in the power). The replication lasts for [Magic Rating of the adept] minutes before the adept's body reverts back to its natural patterns. Any biological samples removed from the adept while this power is active retain the changes indefinitely.

VENTRILOQUISM

0.25 PP

An adept with this power is able to throw their voice up to (Magic) meters. While you do not appear to be speaking, you can make it appear as though the sound of your voice originates from any point that is in range and within line of sight.

SPELLS

ILLUSION

INCUBUS

(REALISTIC, MULTI-SENSE)

Type: M **Range:** LOS
Duration: S **Drain:** F-3

INCUBUS SHROUD

(REALISTIC, MULTI-SENSE, AREA)

Type: M **Range:** LOS (A)
Duration: S **Drain:** F-1

The target gains an idealized appearance in the eyes of observers. Note that the idealized appearance will be different for each observer in a group, so while one guard sees a short-skirted schoolgirl, another sees a man covered in whipped cream, and another just sees a friend offering a free coffee. The target's attitude toward the caster becomes friendly (p. 140, *SR5*). If pressed later to recall the encounter, those affected by the spell will recall the illusion, not the caster.

MANIPULATION

REWIND

(MENTAL)

Type: M **Range:** LOS
Duration: P **Drain:** F

This spell is similar to Alter Memory, but more limited in some ways, more powerful in others. It completely destroys the most recent moment in a person's memory permanently. Each net hit by the caster erases a minute of the target's memory, starting with the most recent. The affected target may suspect something happened when they notice incongruities such as a person suddenly lying dead on the floor, but they will have no memory of how this occurred. The most benign use of this spell is for the caster to get a second chance to say the right thing, but it obviously has potential for more insidious applications.

DETECTION

CONSISTENCY

(PSYCHIC)

Type: M **Range:** LOS
Duration: I **Drain:** F-3

A short burst version of Mindlink, this spell allows you to send a single short mental message or image simultaneously to a number of targets equal to your hits. Common uses include making sure a team uses the same cover story or sending a mental image of an immediate threat.

SOCIAL MANEUVERS

There are all manner of tricks and cons a socially capable person can use to bend a situation to their will. This section offers different options for social maneuvers, though gamemasters can choose which of these options to allow in their game. All social maneuvers incur

a -4 dice pool modifier on the listed test unless otherwise indicated and cost a Free Action in addition to any listed action. Most Social Maneuvers require making one test with the negative modifier to gain a bonus on a second test, while others require making a test with the negative modifier to gain a special effect.

Charming Performance: You'd like to dedicate this song to the handsome mark in the first row ... Gain at least 1 net hit on a Performance test to increase NPC attitude by one step.

Drill Sergeant: Some people respond to the carrot, but you know how to crack the whip when time is of the essence. Make an Intimidate + Charisma Test to make the target take a -2 on their next Leadership + Will Opposed Test to take commands from you.

Faux Pas: The more polite you are, the worse they look in comparison. Make an Etiquette + Charisma Test to make a target seem rude or boorish. They get -2 modifier on Social tests the next turn.

Hustling the Mark: Lose now to win later. This isn't just losing, but building up your mark so they get overconfident and lazy. And then, when they bet it all on a big finish, you tear their throat out. From pool and poker to clubbing and kung-fu, pride comes before their great fall. Make a Con + Charisma Test with a -6 dice pool modifier (instead of the normal -4 for social maneuvers). If you fail this test, you gain a +2 dice pool modifier on your next Con or Negotiation test against the same target.

Informed Opinion: All that reading paid off! Nothing wins over a crowd like knowing what you're talking about. If you have a knowledge skill applicable to the subject at hand in any social situation, you can roll that skill and add a dice pool modifier equal to your hits to your social limit for the encounter. There's a lot more room to get it right when you know the topic inside and out.

Misdirection: You ever wonder why a stage magician brings a beautiful woman on stage? While you were wondering, they stole your watch. Make a Con + Charisma Test. If you receive even one net hit, the target takes a -4 on Perception tests until their next action due to distraction.

Motivational Teacher: Teaching isn't just about communicating a skill's methods to a student, but helping them believe they can do it at all. Make a Leadership + Charisma Test to gain a +2 dice pool bonus on your next Instruction test.

Peer Tutoring: You can find new insights everyone can use when the whole class offers their own unique perspectives. Make an Instruction + Charisma Test at the same time as another player. Each player must use this technique and must possess the skill you are all trying to improve at a rank between 1 and 3 (normally Instruction can only be used if the one making the test has 4 ranks or more). If all involved players score hits equal to the rank they are leveling up to, they all have the training time reduced and can improve that skill.

Pressing Flesh: Physical intimacy is a wonderful thing, but others fear it because of people like you. Make an Etiquette + Charisma Test to touch someone in a benign way. A handshake, a pat on the back, or an "accidental" bump in a crowd. Gain a +2 on Palming against the same person in the same Action Phase.

Rub It In: They know you've got them over a barrel. You know how to make them sweat about it. Make a Negotiation + Charisma Test when you have leverage over the subject. Double the usual +2 dice pool modifier for having blackmail material or a heavy bargaining chip.

Saving Face: You've learned that perfect blend of humor, humility, and quick wit that lets you take a hit and come out looking good. You can recover from a faux pas with grace, and you can take an insult and be a good sport. If you fail any Social test, you can immediately make an Etiquette test with a -4 dice pool modifier. If you succeed, you may make that the test again at no penalty.

Shake It: The promise of action is always more enticing than just a pretty face. Make a Con (Seduction) + Charisma Test. This is only effective with people who would potentially find you romantically attractive. Those observing you gain a +2 to Perception tests against you, but -2 against others in vicinity as you are holding their attention.

Wooden Gun: Make a Palming + Agility Test vs your opponent's Perception + Intuition. If you succeed, you gain a +2 on a Con or Intimidate test against them to imply you have a weapon on hand, ready to use, even if you don't.

Zanshin: Make an opposed Judge Intentions test (p. 152, *SR5*) with a -2 dice pool modifier. With 1 net hit, you can determine if the target has ranks in any Close Combat skill. With 2 net hits, you can learn which Close Combat skill they have the highest rank in. With 3 net hits, you can determine whether they are an amateur (1-2 ranks), well trained (3-5 ranks), or highly trained (6+ ranks).

CHARACTER ARCHETYPES

MACHIAVELLIAN

"It's all going according to plan ..."

You have no illusions about what you are or why you do what you do: a bad person in it for the money. Achieving your goals is all about using the right means, and unlike so many other individuals, you know that people constitute means as much as any gun, spell, or program. Whether it's your laundry list of contacts, some new sucker made in the moment, or your "teammates" (the term "assets" fits so much better to your thinking), you prevail through persuasion. Why pull a gun when you could call in a wave of expendable gangers? Why hack your way through a system when you can just talk the passcodes out of a programmer over dinner? The reason people have strings is so someone can pull them, and you're a fantastic puppetmaster.

Some people who get to know the real you might

call you a psychopath, but you don't particularly care. Morality is a subjective construct for weak people to band together, like prey animals in a herd. You're a lion. You take what you want because it's there to be had.

The whole point is to get ahead, and you're doing well so far. But the road is long. Maybe it'll be paved in bodies. But at least they lay down of their own volition.

Essential skills: Etiquette, Intimidation, Leadership

CON MAN

"Trust me."

Every kid tries to pull one over on her folks. Most get caught and learn a valuable lesson about being honest. You learned something else. Maybe it was to stick to the con. Maybe it was the second-story smoke. Or maybe you just never got caught. But once you learn the power of duplicity, it's hard to stop.

Find out what you're good at, then get paid to do it. That's what they said. Well, you're a top-shelf bamboozler, and as it turns out, there's money in that. Lots of money, so long as you can keep moving. Sure, you could sell used cars, but the payout is low, and they know where you live. If you stay on the move, you can pull some really fantastic scores and be gone before they know what's happening. You treat the con like a psychological game of three-card monte. Fast talk isn't a science to you, but an art you grew up honing. If you could find a way to make an honest living at this, maybe you would. But then, that would defeat the whole purpose.

Essential skills: Con, Etiquette, Negotiation

SNAKE OIL SALESMAN

"This will change your life!"

Every fence knows they live by their reputations. You get a rep of dead clients or faulty product and you don't fence for much longer, let alone breathe. You, on the other hand, go the exact opposite route. You can move a hot piece of product so fast you don't even singe your fingers. Better than that, though, you can sell damn near anything. Whether it's a forgery of famous art, the deed to an alchera cave or an orichalcum mine, or substandard bogwater made out to be alchemical remedies, you've got the know-how to fool the fools.

It's funny how those skills apply to the shadows. Your team laughed for days after you tossed a regular smoke grenade and shouted "Green Ring 8! Masks on!" Oh, you never saw corp sec run so fast. Or when you helped the decker by selling a little Trojan-laced hardware to a corp programmer to help her phish out some admin access. You're not really in it for the violence. You are here to tell a story, to make dreams come true! Maybe people have problems with you, but that's only because they resent you for reminding them of the simple fact that dreams end when you wake up.

Essential skills: Con, Forgery, Negotiation, Perception

QUICKCHANGE

"Give a man a mask, and he'll tell you the truth."

What if you could become anyone? You'd be able to go anywhere, do anything and with anyone. If you were quick enough, you could turn a corner and be someone else entirely. No one could catch you.

Now? You're as close to a chameleon as any metahuman can be. You've practiced the roles so many times that your brain is always on the job, watching people and harvesting their movements and accents by instinct. You've always got a backstory, a sob story, even just a likely story. But you almost never need them, because you know just who to be for any given situation. And how to be them. And fast.

This kind of work isn't cheap, and you're not the one they usually look to for muscle. You're the scout, the spy, and sometimes the assassin. Sometimes by the time the team is arriving, you've been there for hours. If you need to, you could probably stay there for days more.

Sometimes you look in the mirror and all you see are a bunch of disassociated elements of people, and not the single face you were born with. You worry that you don't really have an identity of your own, or that metahuman consciousness is just a bucket full of common ingredients in different combinations. But you don't let philosophy get in the way of good pay for good work.

Essential skills: Con, Disguise, Impersonation, Sneaking

FALSE MAGE

"Nothing up my sleeve–no, don't look!"

Ever since you were a kid, you wanted to be a mage. Anything would do! You made sacrifices to totems that never answered. You read every freeware digital grimoire you could download. You spent every nuyen on things ranging from cults to classes, and still, you've never cast a spell. What you learned was how the metahuman mind works, and some of the ways it is usually tricked. You were a sucker so long that now you can smell one a mile away, and you've seen the sleight of hand that can turn an ordinary man into an extraordinary one.

So now you're out for yourself. You can launch little bolts from your sleeve or make things disappear. To someone without magic, you look like the genuine article. To someone with magic, they can't understand why they cannot see your spells or detect your aura. You must be awfully powerful. Or a charlatan. Or something they've never seen before. You're a wild card, because no one can explain you. Some of it is just stage magic. Some of it is high-tech duplication. But you know that magic is just a frame of mind. The only spell you need to cast is on their imagination. After that? They'll do whatever you want.

Just like magic.

Essential skills: Con, Palming, Performance

THE GRIFTING BIBLE

Con games are all about your social skills, your network, and those who you can convince, one way or another, to be loyal to you. This chapter has rules to enhance those aspects of the game.

NEW RULE: FACTION REPUTATION

Civilization is built around groups of people learning to band together, work together, and face difficulties together. When you're in a shield wall ready to face the charge of the other side's berserkers, you need to know the man next to you won't turn tail and run. When you trade clay jars for some grain to feed your family, you need to know you'll get the right amount of grain so you don't starve to death this winter. This all requires a measure of trust. Any new potential business partner represents both the possibility of new wealth or ruin. Basic risk management theory thus informs us that differentiating one from the other as quickly as possible is essential. But lacking our own history with a stranger, the best substitute is a chain of trust. If someone has dealt fairly with someone we already trust, then we tend to infer that we will have a similar experience. Simply put, this is reputation.

In *Shadowrun*, Street Cred, Notoriety and Public Awareness (p. 372, *SR5*) help determine a character's reputation in the wide world. This section expands these rules via the Faction Reputation system.

Most NPCs will belong to at least one Faction. Gamemasters are encouraged to plan out Factions within their own campaign, but several common example are provided in the *Sample Factions* table. Some NPCs—loners—may belong to no faction at all. Such individuals are commonly referred to as "easy prey." Otherwise, most people in *Shadowrun*'s tough world realize the need to belong to a Faction as a basic principle of survival. While most people may have friends and contacts that cross many different groups, they typically only have a single main Faction that they truly owe allegiance to. Only especially polyvalent individuals will find the energy and social skill to maintain strong, active relationships with multiple Factions.

In many cases, a character's Faction affiliation will be obvious: gangers wear gang colors, corp suits like to wear corp uniforms, etc. But players will not necessarily always know which Factions characters they meet belong to, as some individuals may seek to hide their affiliations, misrepresent themselves, or perhaps generally not feel a need to advertise their affiliation. Players should generally be allowed to find out a character's affiliation through some legwork.

SAMPLE FACTIONS

FACTION	EXAMPLES	ENEMIES WITH...
Specific Gang	The Red Hot Nukes, The Halloweeners, The Ancients, etc.	Other gangs
Specific Corporation	Mitsuhama, Ares, Telestrian, Universal Omnitech, etc.	Other Corporations
Specific "streets" of a city	Seattle, Hong Kong, Manhattan	N/A
Specific Criminal Syndicate	The Mafia, the Yakuza, the Vory, the Seoulpa Rings, etc.	Other Criminal Syndicates
Specific Social Society	Manhattan High Society, European Grand Tour Nobility, Illuminate of the new Dawn, etc.	Varies

Note that player character's contacts can, and probably do, also belong to Factions. Players can work with their gamemaster to assign a Faction to their contacts during character generation. Contacts acquired during gameplay will also typically belong to a Faction.

Factions often have enemies. These are rival Factions whose goals and purpose are anathema to a Faction's own. The gamemaster can determine which Factions are enemies with which other. Typically, Factions that are similar to each other are enemies. For example, any given corporation is an enemy towards any other corporation. Corporations that are similar are in fact competing against each other. Factions don't care much about other Factions that are vastly different in purpose from themselves. For example, while the Halloweeners are certainly violent psychopaths that no Ares citizen would want to spend time with, Ares and the Halloweeners just aren't competing against each other and so it would be strange for Ares and the Halloweeners to be enemies.

Players' actions will affect their Faction Reputation score, as detailed in the sections below. Note that Faction Reputation gains or losses aren't typically instant, as it takes a small amount of time for the word to get around. As a rule of thumb, apply all Faction Reputation score effects at the end of a typical *Shadowrun* mission, at the same time that Karma is awarded. The gamemaster retains final decision on this timing, however.

The gamemaster should take into consideration the fact that dead men tell no tales. If black-hearted shadowrunners extort information out of a character then kill them, keeping the truth of the matter from coming to light, then their Faction Reputation score will not be affected.

Players should keep track of their Faction Reputation by Faction. They need only keep track of Faction Reputation for Factions they have interacted with. Note that Faction Reputation can be negative.

Further, specific NPCs, even if they belong to a certain Faction, may ignore the character's Faction Reputation and treat them however they feel is appropriate. Faction Reputation standings are a guideline to how characters feel and are more relevant when an NPC doesn't really personally know the characters. Thus, in all cases, the gamemaster retains complete discretion in how NPCs interact with player characters. Even very high Faction Reputation towards a certain Faction doesn't rule out the possibility of a character belonging to that Faction lying, betraying, or even trying to kill the player character. The morally murky Sixth World holds no certainties.

FACTION REPUTATION SCORING

ACTION	EFFECT ON FACTION REP.
Negotiation where bargain is kept	+1
Negotiation where bargain is not kept	–2
Con, undetected	+1
Short con, detected	–3
Long con, detected	–5
Long con, detected, per additional week the con lasted	–1
Use of Intimidation against a member of the Faction	–1
Injuring a member of the Faction	–2
Killing a member of the Faction (and fact is known)	–10
Significantly advance Faction's goals	+2
Significantly set back Faction's goals	–2

NEGOTIATION WHERE BARGAIN IS KEPT

When characters engage in a Negotiation Test with a member of a Faction, and both parties meet the terms of the bargain struck, the player's Faction Reputation goes up by one point. Note that this occurs on every successfully met negotiated exchange. Further details on using Negotiation can be found in the sections below.

NEGOTIATION WHERE BARGAIN IS NOT KEPT

When characters use Negotiation to strike a bargain, but then for any reason—willingly or unwillingly—do

not meet the terms of the bargain, then they lose Faction Reputation.

CON, UNDETECTED

If the characters use the Con skill to dupe a member of a Faction, then so long as that Faction member remains blissfully unaware that they are being played, then there is no problem. The interaction is treated essentially as a successful negotiation. Expanded rules on using the Con skill are detailed in sections below.

SHORT CON, DETECTED

If the characters play a quick dupe on a Faction member that is resolved right away (within twenty-four hours), then this is considered a short con. If the con is discovered for what it is, then the mark will harbor a small amount of resentment. The player's Faction Reputation is negatively affected.

LONG CON, DETECTED

If the characters engage in a long, drawn-out con lasting more than twenty-four hours, and should the con ever be detected, then the character's Faction Reputation may never quite recover. If a character is both *able* and *willing* to so maliciously lie and manipulate someone for such an extended duration (and it is discovered), then all other Faction members need ask themselves if they are going to be the next sucker. Any con with an active duration of more than a day that is laid bare grants a Faction Reputation penalty. In addition, the longer the con, the worse the lie. For every full week that the con persists, the character will take an additional -1 to Faction Reputation when the con is discovered.

INTIMIDATING A MEMBER OF THE FACTION

Bullying people around doesn't garner much goodwill. However, strong-arm tactics are a fact of life in the dark

world of *Shadowrun*. While it won't endear you much to anyone, people can get over the occasional threat. Intimidating a member of a Faction earns you a small Faction Reputation penalty.

INJURING A MEMBER OF THE FACTION

Physically hurting a member of a Faction sends clear signals to the rest of the pack that you're pretty much a drekhead. Don't expect to make friends. Note that this Faction Reputation loss is cumulative with others, particularly Intimidation. However, it is not cumulative with killing a member of a Faction (when the fact is known). If you injure someone and subsequently kill them, you only get the penalty from killing them.

KILLING A MEMBER OF THE FACTION (AND FACT IS KNOWN)

Being a murderer is seldom compatible with a good social standing. If a player kills a member of a Faction, they will receive a harsh penalty to their Faction Reputation score. However, note that the gamemaster should only award this penalty if the fact the players are responsible for the murder is known, or at least strongly suspected. The gamemaster has final say on if a murder is pinned, formally or informally, on the players by a Faction. Note that this penalty applies for every killed Faction member. So it is going be pretty hard to make friends with a Faction if you killed a roomful of them in the past.

SIGNIFICANTLY ADVANCE OR SET BACK THE FACTION'S GOALS

Whenever a player character does something to either significantly advance or set back a Faction's goals, this affects the character's Faction Reputation. The gamemaster will need to use discretion to determine if the player characters have in fact significantly affected a Faction's goals. As a rule of thumb, completing a mission for a Faction, or thwarting a Faction's plot, should count as something significant. Note that advancing the goals of a certain Faction generally causes a setback for that Faction's Enemies. The scoring award for affecting a Faction's goals is cumulative with other possible awards.

USES FOR FACTION REPUTATION

Positive Faction Reputation points can be held or spent. A character's Faction Reputation score represents how likely characters are to receive them with open arms. Characters who do Factions a lot of favors (i.e., earn a lot of positive Faction Reputation) but seldom call in favors in return are always well received—Factions love getting something for nothing. Thus, high standing Faction Reputation scores are rewarded with increases to NPC Attitude social modifier (p. 140, *SR5*), which will help player characters in their dealing with characters of that Faction.

However, as an alternative, players can also spend their Faction Reputation points. This represents characters putting a certain strain on people they know within a Faction to gain a benefit. The bonuses characters can obtain from spending Faction Reputation are detailed below.

Spent Faction Reputation is removed from the character's Faction Reputation score, though of course further positive Faction Reputation can continue to be earned via the normal awards described above. Players should thus note the tradeoff Faction Reputation expenditures represent, as spending Faction Reputation will likely affect the bonus to NPC Attitude they will receive.

Note that players may never spend Faction Reputation if the expenditure would bring their total to less than zero.

The only way to get a Faction Reputation score that is less than zero is through continued negative actions. Such cases of negative Faction Reputation negatively affect NPC Attitude.

POSITIVE FACTION REPUTATION EXPENDITURES

As introduced above, positive Faction Reputation can be spent in exchange for some advantages. The possible expenditures for Faction Reputation are described below and summarized in the Faction Reputation Expenditures table.

INCREASE FACTION CONTACT CONNECTION

Characters in good standing can lend their good name to others, vouching for them. There are no better endorsements than those coming from trusted sources, and the player characters have proven themselves to be trustworthy enough that an endorsement from them means something. Character can trade 10 points of positive Faction Reputation to increase by 1 point the Connection rating of one of their contacts. This contact must already be affiliated to the Faction from which the points are coming from. Further, players cannot increase the Connection Rating of a particular contact in this way more than once per month.

Note that this rule does not prevent the gamemaster from modifying a contact's Connection Rating as they deem fit through the normal course of a campaign.

GAIN NEW CONTACT

Characters can tap the network provided by a Faction and put the word out that they are looking for an individual with specific talents or set of skills—in other words, a new contact.

Characters can trade 20 points of Faction Reputation to earn an introduction to a new contact. When buying a contact in this way, the player spending the Faction Reputation points informs the gamemaster of what type of contact they are looking for. The gamemaster then has discretionary power in regards to how close the provided contact matches what the player requested: after all, people aren't manufactured to order. The contact may be a perfect match, but might also be barely adequate. The Faction the contact is drawn from should also affect their abilities and uses. As always, the gamemaster should also keep in mind that contacts have personalities of their own.

Contacts gained in this way always starts at Loyalty 1, but may have whatever Connection Rating the gamemaster sees fit (though lower-level ratings should be considered more likely). The contact will also be affiliated to the Faction in question.

In general, gamemasters should not allow this rule to let players generate high-powered, high-precision contacts willy-nilly. The gamemaster should always maintain a high level of discretionary power in regards to the contact awarded.

INCREASE STREET REP / DECREASE NOTORIETY

Characters with good standing with one particular Faction may request that Faction members spread the word in general that they are trustworthy people. Faction Reputation can be traded to increase Street Cred or decrease Notoriety, as per the table.

REQUEST SERVICE

Characters may put the word out to the Faction that they are in need of a particular service. Maybe they are looking for someone who can sell them as a one-time deal some explosives, maybe they are looking for a certain subject matter expert, maybe they are looking for a combat babysitter. Whatever it is, the player can expend Faction Reputation to find someone that can help them with whatever they are doing. Note here that the gamemaster will need to use judgment to determine if the service can be fulfilled. Players must expend a small amount of Faction Reputation just for making any request for a favor. It may or may not be possible for the Faction to meet this favor. Only if the favor is met is another amount of points deducted.

Note that the Request Service expenditure only applies if a player character requests the favor from the Faction in general. Requesting a service from a Contact, even if they are affiliated to a Faction, goes through the guidelines presented in **Using Contacts** (p. 387, *SR5*).

FACTION REPUTATION EXPENDITURES

EXPENDITURE	FACTION REP. COST
Increase Faction Contact Connection	10
Gain new Contact	20
Increase Street Rep	10
Decrease Notoriety	20
Request Service	2 for requesting
If service provided	3

FACTION REPUTATION CONSEQUENCES

CURRENT FACTION REP.	EFFECT
25 and higher	+4 lines to NPC's Attitude
10 to 25	+3 lines to NPC's Attitude
15 to 19	+2 lines to NPC's Attitude
10 to 14	+1 line to NPC's Attitude
9 to -9	Nothing
–10 to –14	–1 line to NPC's Attitude
–15 to –19	–2 lines to NPC's Attitude
–20 to –24	–3 lines to NPC's Attitude
–25 and lower	–4 lines to NPC's Attitude

EXPANDED RULES FOR SOCIAL SKILLS

NEGOTIATION

Negotiation is the skill used when a character is trying to give something to get something. The key distinction Negotiation has over other social skills is that the agreement isn't one-sided; both parties leave the table (or shady alley, as the case may be) satisfied with their end of the bargain.

The most common type of negotiated exchange involves money on one end, and a good or service on

the other. Shadowrunners negotiating their pay is one common example; so is haggling over new gear. However, during runs, shadowrunners can come across many more varied situations. Agreeing to go beat up an abusive pimp in exchange for information a prostitute knows about her oyabun is an example of the sort of negotiated exchange that can occur during the course of a mission.

When negotiation is initiated between a player character and an NPC, the gamemaster should always consider what the NPC's opening offer (either offering or asking) is in terms of nuyen value. If the negotiation concerns payment for a shadowrun, gamemasters may use the **Run Rewards** section found on p. 375, *SR5*. Otherwise, the gamemaster will need to use their judgement to pick an opening offer.

Characters then perform a Negotiation Test. Each net hit players score in the Negotiation Test affects the final nuyen value of the offer by ten percent. The final total is referred to as the **negotiated value.**

Once a negotiated value is established, characters can substitute part of the negotiated value for other things. Gear, introductions to contacts, and services can all be offered in replacement of nuyen. In general, characters will always have less liquid nuyen to hand out than anything else. Character will almost always prefer to give out things other than nuyen and will often accept the same from player characters.

In the end, everyone knows that cash is king. The nuyen value of non-monetary exchanges is of lesser value than money itself. The relative value of negotiated items is detailed below, and summarized in the Bargaining table.

In all cases, the negotiated value should be used by gamemasters as a guideline only. Some characters have tons of nuyen and don't mind spending it. Others are very poor and, rather than being able to offer much, will appeal to character's sense of honor to perform a task (but, hey, at least that gets the characters extra Karma as per p. 376, *SR5*)

GEAR

Characters can offer gear instead of cash payment. Gear value during negotiation isn't the same as its face value. Typically, offering gear will be less valuable than cold, hard nuyen, unless the gear is rare and hard to get. To determine the nuyen value of a piece of gear, increase the item's value by ten percent per point of Availability. Then divide the final result by two. This is what it is worth as a negotiation item. Expressed as an equation, this is: Negotiable value = Price + (Price x [(Availability x 10) / 100])

For example, a Ranger Arms SM-5 sniper rifle has an Availability of 16 and a stated cost of 28,000 nuyen. The Availability increases its value by ten percent for each of its 16 points, meaning it goes up by 160 percent, or is multiplied by 1.6. The calculation for determining its value as part of a negotiated payment is as follows: [28,000 + (28,000 x 1.6)] / 2 = 36,400 nuyen.

Note that this rule for valuing gear only applies if the gear is offered as an unexpected bargaining element, not if a character is specifically looking to buy the item from another character.

Also note that the gamemaster should exert great discretion in determining if a particular contact has a particular piece of gear on hand to offer as a negotiation piece, or is willing to accept a particular trade. For example, a terrorist organization leader offering a team of shadowrunners a job might be able to throw in a new Ranger Arms SM-5 sniper rifle as payment, but a community activist asking shadowrunners to destroy a local ghoul nest would probably not have one (then again, this being *Shadowrun*, perhaps he does).

CONTACTS

Contacts are a valuable commodity in the world of *Shadowrun*, arguably one of the most powerful assets characters have access to. Thus, it is quite possible that a character may offer as a form of payment an introduction to a contact that can be of use to the player characters.

A contact gained through a negotiated deal will typically start at Loyalty 1, unless the gamemaster sees a reason for this to be higher. The Connection Rating, however, is where the value is. Each point of Connection is worth 1,000 nuyen in negotiated value.

Again, gamemasters should be careful to consider if any given character would have access to valuable contacts they are willing to share. While offering up a Connection Rating 12 contact is a nice way to meet the negotiated value of a deal, not many people actually have such well-placed contacts to offer up—and if they had such a thing, they would be very careful in how they deploy them, at the risk of losing them.

SERVICE

Characters can offer to perform particular services as a form of payment. Services come in a wide variety of forms. At the simplest level, characters can offer up their Active skills, performing some sort of task or series of tasks for the characters. They can also offer their Knowledge skills, offering to inform the characters of some part of what they know. A specific tidbit of information can be offered.

When a character offers their use of Active skills to perform a task, determine the highest dice pool the character will use in the course of performing the task, and divide this by 4, rounding up the result (in other words, a dice pool of 8 grants a multiplier of 2 and a dice pool of 12 grants a multiplier of 3, and so forth). Multiply this factor by the base value of 150 nuyen to get the hourly value.

NEGOTIATION EXAMPLE

Jimmy No is looking to offload to his info broker contact some especially juicy paydata he liberated from Shiawase during his last mission. The gamemaster sets the base value of the paydata at 5,000 nuyen. Jimmy No and the info broker perform an Opposed Test using Negotiation + Charisma, and Jimmy rolls rather well, scoring 5 net hits. The negotiated value of the information is increased to 7,500 nuyen.

The gamemaster determines that the info broker doesn't have that kind of cash, so he makes Jimmy the best offer he can. The info broker has a crate of APDS rounds he really doesn't care about, so he's willing to offer it to Jimmy. There are fifty rounds of APDS ammunition. APDS rounds have an Availability of 12F and cost of 120 nuyen. The negotiated value of the APDS rounds is [120 + (120 x 1.2)] / 2, or 132. This is multiplied by 5 for the number of rounds, making the value 660 nuyen.

The info broker, being an info broker, also knows a lot of interesting things and interesting people. He is willing to introduce Jimmy to an exclusive, high-profile fixer (Connection 6). That introduction has a negotiated value of 6,000 nuyen.

The info broker's offer to Jimmy No is thus fifty rounds of APDS ammo, an introduction to a Connection Rating 6 fixer, and 840 nuyen.

Jimmy considers the offer. It's a little light on nuyen. Jimmy asks if he can get cash instead of the introduction to the fixer, but the gamemaster determines the info broker just can't do that. Jimmy asks if he can swap the APDS for money, and the gamemaster determine that yes, this is possible.

Jimmy thinks it over. APDS ammo isn't easy to get, so this might be a bargain too sweet to pass. So, finally, Jimmy decides to accept the offer as is, and the deal is struck.

Then determine how long, in hours, the task will take the character, and multiply this time by the hourly value. This is the negotiated value of a performed service.

If the character is offering information instead of action, multiply the Knowledge skill dice pool from which the information is derived and multiply by 100. If the character does not possess the relevant Knowledge skill from which the information they wish to share comes from, the gamemaster will need to value the information somewhere between a Rating of 5 to 12 to determine negotiated value.

For example, a hacker offers to compile a superficial background profile on someone. The hacker has a dice pool of 12 dice. He will be performing a Matrix Search (p. 241, *SR5*) which will take him a mere thirty minutes. Thus, the negotiated value of the service is (12 / 4 = 3) x 150 = 450 nuyen.

BARGAINING TABLE

OFFERED	NEGOTIATED VALUE WORTH
Gear	[Cost + (Cost x Availability x 10%)] / 2
Contacts	Connection Rating x 1,000
Service, Active skill	(Dice pool / 4) x 150 per hour
Service, Knowledge skill / information	(Dice pool) x 100

USING CON

While much of a con can be role-played using social skills, the following rules provide a mechanical structure to help players through each step of a con, providing more form to players' efforts and rewards for successfully building effective elements of a con. The steps and tests listed below should be combined with players' ingenuity in designing a con and coming up with various flourishes and tactics to make their con seem convincing. This means that the gamemaster should be prepared to provide modifiers (both positive and negative) to the various tests listed below based on the cleverness players display in setting up and carrying out their operation.

LONG CONS AND SHORT CONS

Many of these steps are identical for Long Cons and for Short Cons. Where designated, a particular action can only be used in either a Long Con or a Short Con. For Long Cons, the intervals necessary for a particular step necessitates that the action take at least a full day to complete. The following are the phases of a con, and the actions that a con artist or a con artist team can take during that particular phase. Where designated, a Teamwork Test is available.

PHASE ONE: PREPARATION

During the preparation phase, a con artist is attempting to build up two things: Intel and Prop Rating. These values become critical in later phases. Both Ratings start at 0 and are added to (or subtracted from) during the actions taken during this phase.

LEGWORK

(OPTIONAL, LONG CON)

Legwork involves reaching out to contacts and figuring out the target's strengths, weaknesses, vices, virtues,

goals, connections, etc. A character reaches out to a contact using the rules for Legwork found on p. 387 of *SR5* and (optionally) the expanded rules starting on p. 172 of *Run Faster*. The Negotiation test with the contact is used to determine the information that the con artist has acquired. The net hits on this test are added to the Intel Rating.

MATRIX SEARCHES

(OPTIONAL, LONG CON)

By scouring the Matrix for data, a character can build up a ton of information about a person including shopping habits, host and node access, data about Matrix usage, and other personally identifiable information. This process is similar to how a Matrix Search is performed, but with an Opposed Test instead of an Extended Test. The target's dice pool is based on how little they are connected to the Matrix; consult the table below for recommended dice pools. As always, the gamemaster has the final say in how big to make the target's dice pool. Net hits on the Opposed Test are added to the Intel Rating.

SCOUTING THE TARGET

(MANDATORY, LONG CON, SHORT CON)

Whether determining which target to hit or gathering information about a target firsthand, all cons involve a degree of surveillance. To do this, the con artist rolls Perception + Intuition vs. the target's Perception + Intuition. The net hits on this test add to (or subtract from) the Intel Rating.

EVALUATING THE TARGET

(OPTIONAL, LONG CON)

This optional step uses a specific Knowledge skill (Psychology) with a specialization in Profiling to further refine and enhance any gathered intelligence. The con artist rolls Psychology (Profiling) + Logic [Intel Rating] vs. the current Intel Rating. Any net hits add to the Intel Rating. Because the Intel Rating serves as a limit on this test, this action cannot be performed with an Intel Rating of 0 or less.

PROP-BUILDING

(OPTIONAL, LONG CON, SHORT CON)

Sometimes a con requires a little physical proof to help seal the deal. When that proof doesn't exist and needs to be manufactured wholesale, perform this step. The con artist can get someone else to perform this step, but it involves letting someone in on at least a small aspect of your con. Whichever person is building the prop rolls an extended Forgery or Artisan (gamemaster discretion) + Agility Test. The threshold of the test is set by the con artist, who determines how strong of a Prop Rating he/she wants. The threshold is equal to twice the desired Prop Rating, with an interval of 1 day. If the prop needs to be ready before the threshold is reached, the process can be halted with a lower Prop Rating than desired. In cases where the test is stopped early, the Prop Rating is equal to the number of hits achieved, divided by two (rounded down).

PROP ACQUISITION

(OPTIONAL, LONG CON, SHORT CON)

Prop acquisition achieves a similar goal to prop building, but the props in question are usually legitimate. This might entail a whole new run just to get the prop—in that case, ignore these rules and go start running, chummer! Prop acquisition works exactly like the rules for buying gear found on p. 416, *SR5*. However some props are going to be esoteric. In those cases, gamemasters are advised to make their own Availability and prices for the item(s) in question as the needs of the game dictate. As a general rule, the Availability of a prop is three times the Prop Rating desired, and the price is equal to the Availability times 1,000 nuyen.

PHASE TWO: ENGAGE THE CON

At the end of this phase, if successful, the con artist has achieved their initial goal and bilked the target of whatever goal the con artist had in mind. Engaging the Con is a much faster phase than the Preparation, but it can last substantially longer. Every time that the gamemaster determines the con is in jeopardy of being discovered, this phase comes back into play (see Reinforcement, below).

SET THE HOOK

(MANDATORY, LONG CON, SHORT CON)

All the props, all the research, all the rehearsals come down to this moment. The con artist rolls Con + Charisma against the higher of the target's Judge Intentions or Con + Intuition. The con artist gets to add the Prop Rating that has been accrued to their dice pool, while the Intel Rating is applied as a negative modifier to the target's resistance dice pool. If the artist wins, then the target believes the lies of the con artist. If the target wins, the target has an idea of what's going on and rebukes the artist. The con has failed. If the test results in a tie, then the mark is interested, but skeptical. Reinforcement becomes mandatory instead of optional. On a Short Con, a tie goes to the target.

REINFORCE THE LIE

(OPTIONAL, LONG CON)

In this step, the artist is attempting to set the hook a little deeper into the target. This might be necessary be-

cause the target has become skeptical, or because the target has discovered that the artist might not be telling the truth. In either event, the artist must reinforce their lies. The old Intel Rating and Prop Ratings are no longer valid, and the artist must rely on sharp wits to keep the target interested. The con artist rolls Con + Charisma vs. the target's Judge Intentions (Charisma + Intuition). If the con artist wins, the target continues to buy the lie. If the target wins or ties, then the target realizes that they are being duped and reacts accordingly.

PHASE THREE: THE GETAWAY

The difference between a thug and a con artist is that a con artist uses words as weapons. But the difference between a con artist and a great con artist is in how they make their getaway. Any con artist can cut and run, but the con will invariably be found out. If the artist wants to, there is an additional action that can be done when it's time for the artist to get out of the con.

GRACEFUL EXIT

(OPTIONAL, LONG CON, SHORT CON)

The con artist has decided to end the con for one reason or another, and a graceful exit is necessary. Perhaps the artist convinces the target that they are suddenly needed in Hong Kong, or that "Daddy's just going out for cigarettes." Whatever the case, the artist makes a Con + Charisma Test vs. the higher of the target's Judge Intentions or Con + Intuition. If the artist wins, the target believes that the con was legit this whole time and believes all the lies that the artist was telling. Even if evidence is presented to refute the con, the target is inclined to still believe the artist. If the target wins or ties, then something is awry and the story begins to fall apart. The gamemaster has the final say on how the target reacts in this situation, but the con artist still has acquired their objective (done in Phase Two). If a Graceful Exit is not performed, then the target knows something is wrong as soon as the con artist disappears.

USING INTIMIDATION

Intimidation is what happens when the veneers of polite society come down. Might makes right, take what you want, that sort of thing. It is the simplest, most primal of the social skills, since it's pretty one-sided. Intimidation either works right away or it doesn't. You get what you want, or you don't. This short-term simplicity can translate to long-term consequences. Being intimidated is an unpleasant form of violence that people often remember for a long time. As long as people remain afraid of you, though, then they can hate you all they want—they won't do anything about it. But as any dictator will tell you, once the peasants decide they can take you on, things can get dicey.

Intimidation can be used instead of Negotiation, but to the same effect. Every net hit in the Intimidation Opposed Test (p. 139, *SR5*) can be used to gain something without needing to give anything in return. In many cases of Intimidation, the situation may be that there is no opening offer, or that the player characters are pressing a character for information, whose intrinsic value is difficult to evaluate. In such cases, the gamemaster should consider that each net hit in the Intimidation Test gains the players either 250 nuyen in value or one truthful detail in regards to the information being sought.

If the player characters do not generate any net hits, then they have failed to intimidate their target. Different characters will respond in different ways. Most characters will just tell the player characters to frag off and leave it at that. Violent characters that have a reasonable chance of taking on the player characters on the spot may do so, but such situations are rare.

If the player characters glitch, then the target of their intimidation holds a grudge. Such characters are unlikely to attack the player characters immediately unless they are sure they have an overwhelming advantage. More likely, the characters will plan an ambush for the characters at a later time. These characters will patiently wait for their moment. Perhaps they will lure the characters into a future deal that sounds really good, only to have armed ambushers spring a trap. Perhaps their revenge will simply consist of finding the player character's worst enemy and feeding them information.

A critical glitch will result in much of the same effect of a glitch, except the character will plan some exquisite revenge on the player character. The character will carefully plan revenge in great detail and will likely make an alliance with a known enemy of the character. They won't want to just coldly kill the character—they'll want to destroy them, erase them, and humiliate them. The player character will gain a longaterm enemy, which the gamemaster is encouraged to flesh out and work into the campaign.

Note that using Intimidation to get something out of an existing Contact has consequences of its own, as described on p. 178, *Run Faster*.

SOCIAL SKILLS EXAMPLE

Haze has been hired by a Mr. Johnson to find and kill an informant. The informant, an ork who goes by the name of Olho Vermelho, is a former member of GreenWar who had a change of heart and is getting ready to spill the beans on his ex-organization's next big plot. He is hiding out somewhere in the *favelas* of the Rio de

Janeiro district of the megasprawl of Metrópole, Amazonia—a deadly area Haze doesn't know very well. However, Haze's employers hand him a psych profile on the target that may come in handy later.

The first thing Haze does upon arriving in Amazonia is to get a local guide, a tough and resourceful young lady by the name of Miranda. Miranda asks Haze for 2,000 nuyen a day for her services. Haze's player and the gamemaster perform a Negotiation + Charisma Opposed Test, and Haze gets only 1 net hit, lowering the cost by 10 percent. The negotiated value is thus 1,800 nuyen per day. Haze is a stingy bastard, so he offers the guide a Rating 2 fake SIN as payment. A fake SIN is definitely something that Miranda, who is SINless, is interested in, as it would make her life a heck of a lot easier for a little while. She'd be able to buy diapers for her baby and groceries in a real store, rather than having to bargain with the creepy local gang leader. The negotiated value of a Rating 2 fake SIN is [5,000 + (5,000 x 0.2)] / 2, or 3,000 nuyen. That, plus 600 nuyen cash, will get Haze two days of her services.

On the first day, Haze gets drunk and parties all night at a hot nightclub his guide brought him to. Behind the pleasure, though, was some business—at the nightclub, Haze learns the general area where Olho Vermelho is hiding out.

The next day, Haze asks Miranda to bring him to this district where Olho Vermelho is hiding. Miranda knows this place, but she isn't too keen on bringing Haze there, as it is a very dangerous part of town, even by *favela* standards. She's going to need some convincing. The gamemaster rules that Haze can try a Leadership + Charisma Opposed Test to get her to act, since Haze hired her and is thus in a position of authority in regards to her. Haze has strong social skills, but Leadership isn't one of them. Haze's player asks the gamemaster what the test would be. The gamemaster determines that Haze, in this situation, has a superior rank (he's her employer), which gets him +1. On the negative side, Haze is not part of Miranda's social strata, and he knows nothing of her way of life, so that inflicts a -1 penalty, canceling the previous bonus. In terms of general modifiers, Miranda is Friendly (+2) but she feels Haze's request is Harmful to her (-3). Haze's player rolls and gets no net hits. Miranda won't budge.

Haze changes tack. He may not be an inspirational figure, but his bad-boy good looks have often worked in the past. He lowers his tone and speaks softly to Miranda, moving closer, telling her he will never let anyone hurt her, as in the short time they have spent together he has already begun developing feelings for her. This is technically a Long Con, but without any preparation, it really is simply a Con + Charisma Test with no applicable modifiers. Haze trusts his very high Charisma and Con will see him through. He scores two net hits. Miranda hears a lot of stuff from the handsome elf that may not be believable, but she finds herself wanting to believe it, shutting up the little voice in her head trying to alert her. She should know better, but she agrees to help out Haze. The gamemaster also rules that, from this point out, Miranda has a romantic attraction to Haze (should it come into play)

Once Miranda brings Haze over to the *favela* in question, Haze finds plenty of gangers—most likely paid to protect Olho Vermelho—but the man himself remains elusive. Haze is a cocky sort of guy, so after too much pussy-footing for his taste, decides to just approach a kid wearing gang colors and ask him where Olho Vermelho can be found. Haze opts to pay the ganger kid for the information, so this is a standard Negotiation Opposed Test.

The gamemaster takes a minute to think about this. Revealing *anything* to strangers is not something gangs are fond of doing, so the information isn't exactly for sale—the kid could get into trouble for betraying the gang. The first thing that needs to happen is an Etiquette + Charisma vs. Perception + Charisma Opposed Test to determine what the kid thinks of Haze. The gamemaster consults the Social Modifiers table and determines the kid is Prejudiced against the outsider, and Haze's request could be Harmful to the kid. However, while the kid wasn't looking, Haze discreetly cast Control Thoughts on him and earned 3 successes there, so the final modifiers are (-2 + -3 + 3) = -2. Haze manages to earn 3 net hits, and so pushes the kid up from Prejudiced to Suspicious. Not great, but it's something.

Haze then performs an Opposed Test using Negotiation + Charisma. While the kid isn't keen on selling out a member of his gang, everyone has a price. The gamemaster sets the initial offering rather high (by *favela* standards) to represent the kid's internal conflict, marking it at 2,000 nuyen. Haze's player performs his Negotiation + Charisma Opposed Test, with only the General Modifiers being applicable (Suspicious, Harmful to NPC, and Control Thoughts). Haze nets a solid 4 hits. The negotiated value is now 1,200 nuyen. Haze doesn't want to pay that much, so decides to offer the kid three doses of deepweed as partial payment. Deepweed is fairly valuable, having an Availability of 4 and cost of 400 nuyen, therefore having a negotiated worth of 280 nuyen a dose, so that's 840 nuyen.

But Haze is feeling extra stingy, so he actually decides to use Intimidation to tell the kid to accept just the deepweed as payment and be grateful he's getting that much. Haze's player performs an Opposed Intimidation + Charisma Test and earns 3 net hits. Since the initial offer was 2,000 nuyen, three hits worth ten percent of the base value each means Haze can growl his way out of 600 nuyen. Haze tosses the kid the deepweed and learns where Olho Vermelho is holed up.

Haze now strolls over to the safehouse. He concludes that taking out Olho Vermelho by force would be suicidal. So he decides he's going to pretend he's a bodyguard sent to move Olho Vermelho to another

location, because this one has been compromised. This will be a Short Con. This is where Olho Vermelho's psych profile comes in handy; the gamemaster rules this acts as a Rating 3 Intel.

Haze introduces himself and gets Olho to at least hear him out so he can spin his story. Haze first makes an Etiquette + Charisma vs. Perception + Charisma Opposed Test to try to ease tensions. The gamemaster decides that the modifiers are: Attitude is Hostile and the results (should they be false) would be Disastrous to NPC. However, Olho is somewhat worldly, and he knows Haze by reputation. Haze's Street Cred minus his Notoriety gets him a +3, so the modifiers total out at -4. Haze declares the use of Edge on this one, and manages to squeeze in 2 successes. He at least manages to move the NPC Attitude up by one notch.

Haze spins his story, making this a Short Con. He already has his Intel Rating 3 package (the psych profile his employer handed him), so without further ado, Haze's player attempts to Set The Hook. General modifiers continue to apply (now -3), but looking at the Con table, nothing else does. This is all or nothing, so Haze's player again injects Edge into his roll. Haze manages to get 3 net hits. The mark buys what he's selling.

Haze escorts Olho Vermelho out into the alley, allegedly back toward his parked car. Haze lets the excited mark take a few steps ahead, chatting with Miranda. Then, in one dark corner, Haze raises his silenced pistol and pops two in the back of Olho Vermelho's head, splattering the walls with blood. Miranda jumps but stifles her cry. Haze watches as the man's aura turns cold grey to confirm the kill, then picks Miranda's hand and heads out of the area.

Two bullets and lots of words were all that were needed to complete the mission—just the way Haze likes it.

In celebration, he seduces Miranda into his bed that night, before disappearing without a word the next morning.

Tallying Faction Reputation adjustments, Haze didn't really make any friends today. Because he refused to pay out the full negotiated value, the bargain is considered to not have been kept (-2 Faction Reputation). On top of that, he used Intimidation on the kid (-1 Faction Reputation). Miranda, for her part, is a member of a Faction the gamemaster refers to as "Rio de Janeiro Streets." While he concluded a deal with Miranda (+1), he also conned her by making her believe he had feelings for her, a lie that was revealed when he carelessly left her (-4). Miranda won't have nice things to say about Haze to her people, and Haze earns -3 Faction Reputation with the Rio de Janeiro Streets.

FIN

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SHADOWRUN
FIFTH EDITION

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